







THE BAND PLAYING AT THE BATTLE OF SAN JUAN. *Frontispiece.*

THE
YOUNG BANDMASTER

OR

CONCERT STAGE AND BATTLEFIELD

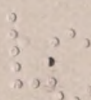
BY

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"LEO, THE CIRCUS BOY," ETC., ETC.



NEW YORK
THE MERSHON COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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PREFACE.

"THE YOUNG BANDMASTER" is a complete story in itself, but forms the fourth volume of a line of books issued under the title of the "Flag of Freedom Series."

In the former volumes of this series I told of the doings of several boys in Cuba, in the Philippines, and in the Hawaiian Islands. In the present work the scene is shifted back to the United States and to Cuba. The hero is forced to make his own way in the world, and, having a strong taste for music, becomes a musician, and joins, first a theatrical company, and then a regular band, of which he, later on, becomes the bandmaster. This is at the time of the War with Spain, and caught by the spirit of the times and finding himself landed in Cuba, Paul Graham cannot resist the temptation to join the ranks of the military musicians; and with one of our leading military bands he goes with the army of invasion to take part in the downfall of Santiago.

My object in writing this tale was primarily to show some of the ins-and-outs of life among musicians in general and the workings of a con-

cert company while "on the road," as it is popularly termed, and also to show what a patriotic boy of a musical turn can do toward inspiring soldiers when advancing to the perils of the firing line. That the drum, the bugle, and the band play an important part on nearly every battlefield is a truth for which any old army officer will vouch, and the patriotic strains from a band have been known to turn more than one seeming defeat into victory.

Once more thanking my young friends for their cordial reception of my former books, I place this volume in their hands, hoping they will derive from it much of both pleasure and profit.

CAPTAIN RALPH BONEHILL.

March 1, 1900.

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THE YOUNG BANDMASTER.

CHAPTER I.

A ROW AND ITS RESULT.

“PAUL GRAHAM !”

“Yes, Mr. Dunkirk.”

“Will you stop that outrageous noise? Toot, toot, toot-a-toot, all the afternoon, until I am about ready to go to an insane asylum.”

“I did not know you objected to my practicing in the attic of the house, Mr. Dunkirk. You never objected before.”

“That is because I am too indulgent with you, Paul,” fumed the fussy old fellow, who had been the youth’s guardian for the past three years. “I ought to have smashed that cornet six months ago. What good does it do to play on it, anyway?”

“I am trying to master the instrument, sir.”

“For what?”

“Some day I am going to join a band or orchestra.”

"Tut! tut! Don't talk like a fool. Join a band, indeed! I fancy you'll earn your living in a much more respectable way—if I have anything to say about it—and I think I have."

"Being a musician is as respectable as anything," replied Paul Graham, his handsome face flushing.

"Especially such musicians as were playing in the gutters of Stoneville only last week, eh?" sneered Hiram Dunkirk. "I presume it would just suit your low taste to join such a crowd."

"The poor fellows were down on their luck—they were honest and willing enough," answered Paul quickly, for he had been interested in the strolling players and had assisted them to the extent of his slender purse. "A minstrel show went to pieces in Boston and left them stranded."

"What! Do you mean to say you took up with those rascals?" roared Hiram Dunkirk. "You are a worse boy than I took you to be. Perhaps you would like to join such a gutter band?"

"No, sir; when the proper time comes I want to join the best band or orchestra I can get into."

"You'll do nothing of the kind, boy—nothing of the kind!" Hiram Dunkirk's voice rose shrilly, showing his anger was growing deeper. "As soon as your schooling is at an end, and that will be next month, you'll begin to learn

some trade. I've already consulted Joel Burgess about it."

"Joel Burgess!" repeated Paul in perplexity.

The man mentioned was one who owned a large coopering establishment in Stoneville. He was a hard-hearted individual, who kept his employees at bottom wages, and no one liked him.

"Yes, Joel Burgess. He said he might take you in and teach you the coopering trade."

"I don't know as I care to become a cooper," answered Paul coldly. "I think you might have come to me about this before you went to Mr. Burgess," he added bitterly.

"I know what is best for you, boy. You ought to be thankful that Joel Burgess will take you in. Why, a good cooper earns most twenty dollars a week down here, and more in some of the big cities!"

"And first-class musicians earn from twenty to a hundred dollars per week, Mr. Dunkirk. What is more, my father always told me that I could become a musician like my late Uncle Robert if I wished."

"I reckon that was when your father considered himself well off—before the Stoneville Quarry Company failed."

"I admit that, sir. But surely my father left enough to give me a good musical education, and more."

"Your father didn't leave any considerable amount, I can tell you that."

"Well, how much did he leave, Mr. Dunkirk? I have wanted to ask you a good many times, but you never gave me the chance."

"He—ah—he didn't leave much, my boy, as I said before. The exact amount I can't state, for the affairs of the quarry company are in a tangle yet."

"They ought not to be after three years. Mr. Powell told me he thought the financial end of the matter had been wound up over a year ago."

At these words Hiram Dunkirk started, but quickly recovered.

"Mr. Powell is one of those know-alls who know nothing," he snarled. "He is the man who is teaching you how to play that horn, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, you had better drop him. How much do you pay him?"

"Fifty cents a lesson, once a week."

"Humph! And where do you get the money? I give you only a quarter."

"I know that well enough. I earn the rest doing odd jobs down in the town after school and on Saturdays."

"And thus neglect your work around this house, eh? Well, it shan't go on any longer. You'll give up taking cornet lessons—hear?—and

attend to your home work and your schooling. And another thing—I don't want you to have anything more to do with that Powell. He is no kind of a man for you to know."

"He was one of father's friends," said Paul warmly. "He is a real gentleman, and often gives me a much longer lesson than I pay for. He says that some day I am bound to make my mark as a player, and——"

"Shut up! I don't want to hear another word about him or about your playing. It's all tomfoolery! I won't have you blowing your lungs away on the horn. It's enough to give you consumption, or something."

To this outburst Paul remained silent. Hiram Dunkirk moved toward the attic door only to return as before.

"I don't know but what it would be best for you to go to work for Joel Burgess at once," he said. "This single month of schooling that is left before vacation won't do you much good, and he said he had an opening now. I reckon you can go to school to-morrow and tell the teacher, and the next day we'll call on Burgess and you can settle down to business."

At these words Paul's eyes flashed angrily. It was bad enough to speak of making him a cooper when he did not want to learn the trade; it was still worse to make him give up schooling when

he was so near to graduating and getting his diploma.

"I would like to finish at school——" he began.

"Never mind what you would like, boy. It's come to my mind that it's about time I took you in hand."

"I don't care for the cooper's trade——"

"And I say you shall learn it—so there!" exclaimed Hiram Dunkirk, in more of a rage than he had previously exhibited. "I reckon I'm master of this house—and so long as you are under its roof and I am your guardian you'll do as I want you to. Hand over that horn."

As he concluded, the unreasonable man strode forward to where Paul had placed the cornet on a rickety attic table. Before he could gain the brass instrument, however, Paul had secured it.

"What do you want of it?" asked the boy uneasily.

"I'm going to put it away so as you can't waste any more time over it."

"It is mine, sir; I traded for it a pair of skates and a sled, at Riley's second-hand store."

"Never mind; I want you to give it to me."

The youth hesitated, fearful that if once he got his hands on the cornet Hiram Dunkirk would smash it to bits; and, indeed, that is quite likely what the old man would have done, for he

had no more ear for music than a bull. On the other hand, to Paul, the brass B-flat cornet was the most precious of his few possessions. Music was the art which had captivated his soul, and the shiny cornet was his idol in that art.

"Do you hear? Hand it over!" cried Hiram Dunkirk, as he saw Paul back away with the cornet in his hands.

"I will put it away—for the present, Mr. Dunkirk," and Paul placed the instrument behind his back. "I—I——"

"Give it to me, or I'll knock you down, you young rascal!" fairly shrieked the man, for it was seldom that anyone in that household dared to cross him. "Matters have come to a pretty pass when you dare disobey me in this fashion. Take that!"

Seeing that Paul did not comply with his demand, Hiram Dunkirk hauled off with his open right hand, intending to hit the youth over the ear. But Paul dodged, and the hand struck the plastering beside the window with such force that a portion of the wall fell off. Hiram Dunkirk uttered a snarl like that of a baffled wild beast.

"You imp!" he ejaculated. The next moment he had leaped upon Paul. There was a brief scuffle, the overturning of the table, and then man and boy were struggling upon the floor—with the man on top.

CHAPTER II.

PAUL COMES TO A DETERMINATION.

“LET me up!”

“I won’t—not until you promise to obey me!” returned Hiram Dunkirk wrathfully. “You have wanted a warming for a good long while, Paul Graham, and now I’m going to give it ye!”

“Let me up, or—or you’ll regret it!” panted Paul, whose wind was fast leaving him, for his tormentor was a man who weighed over a hundred and fifty pounds.

“Will you obey me and give me the horn?”

Instead of replying, Paul renewed his struggles. Although small, he was strong, and as limber as an eel; and watching his chance he pushed Hiram Dunkirk to one side, thereby upsetting that astonished individual, and the next instant he was on his feet and making for the doorway with all possible speed.

“Hi! hi! Stop, you young rascal!” roared the man, more overcome with wrath than ever. “Stop, or I’ll—I’ll kill you!”

“I have no desire to be killed,” returned Paul. “I’ll come back after I have put away the cornet

and after you have cooled off!" And away he went down the attic stairs, three steps at a time.

Hiram Dunkirk continued to yell after him, and this alarmed his wife, a short, greasy woman of fifty, who was ten times meaner even than her husband, and who could hardly bear the sight of Paul. She came rushing out of a bedroom on the second floor just as the boy was speeding past. There was a stunning shock as both came together, and the boy went spinning in one direction, while Mrs. Dunkirk spun in another.

"Oh, my land sakes!" wailed the woman, as soon as she could catch her breath. "Paul Graham, how dare you?"

"Excuse me, I couldn't help it," he began.

"Margy! Margy! Hold him! Don't let him get away!" came from Hiram Dunkirk. "I'm going to give him the worst hiding a boy ever got!"

At these words Mrs. Dunkirk essayed to struggle to her feet. But this was not so easy, and long before it was accomplished Paul had reached the lower hallway and bolted through a side door of the house.

"He's gone—I couldn't hold him," puffed the woman. "What's the row about, Hiram?"

"About—everything!" grumbled her husband, as he came down from the attic. "Margy, I've got to take that boy in charge or he'll be the

ruination of us!" And the old man shook his head solemnly.

"Why, Hiram, ye don't mean he's—he's discovered something?" came from Mrs. Dunkirk in a semi-whisper.

"Hush!" interrupted Hiram Dunkirk, clapping his hand over her mouth. "No, he aint discovered anything—yet. But there's no telling what will happen if he's allowed to run around as he pleases. Since he got that cornet he has been taking lessons of that Anderson Powell, and Powell told him he knew matters had been settled up at the stone quarries a year ago."

"I wouldn't let him have anything to do with Powell, Hiram."

"I aint a-going to—and he's not to learn the horn or go to school any longer neither. Day after to-morrow he goes to work for Joel Burgess. Burgess will work him so hard he won't have time to think of what is a-coming to him." Hiram Dunkirk chuckled craftily. "Let Joel alone for working a boy for all he is worth!"

"Yes; but maybe it would be better to send him away from Stoneville," said his wife suggestively. "He is bound to hear more than he ought to know, sooner or later."

"That's true, and I may fix it to send him away later on. Or, it may be Joel will treat him so

meanly he'll run away of his own account," concluded Hiram Dunkirk.

In the meantime Paul had left the vicinity of the house and was hurrying toward the barn, a rambling structure standing at the lower end of what had once been a well-kept garden, but which was now little better than a quarter-acre patch of weeds. For three years the Dunkirk homestead, situated upon the outskirts of Stoneville, had been going to decay. Since the death of Paul's father Hiram Dunkirk had done but little toward supporting himself. Why this was so my readers will discover later on.

Reaching the barn, Paul looked back to see if he was followed, and then entered the structure. His precious cornet, along with some music he had hastily snatched up, was hidden away in the loft, and he breathed easier. Sitting down on a feed-box he reviewed the situation.

It was not a pleasant retrospect. Nine years before no boy in the city of Boston had been happier than he. At that time father, mother, and son had lived in the fashionable portion of the town, near the Back Bay, and Paul had had nearly all that heart could wish.

Reverses had come with remarkable rapidity. On a trip to New York with the Uncle Robert previously mentioned the steamboat on which Mrs. Graham had taken passage had struck on a

rock in Long Island Sound, and in the fog she and the uncle had been pitched overboard and drowned.

This calamity had nearly bereft Mr. Graham of his reason, while Paul had spent many a bitter hour mourning his lost parent. His father had soon after sold out his home and business at the Hub and settled in Stoneville, in a hired house adjoining Hiram Dunkirk's estate.

When Mr. Graham had again felt able to attend to business he had bought an interest in the Stoneville Quarry Company, in which Hiram Dunkirk was also a stockholder. Thus the two had become acquainted, much to Paul's present sorrow.

A premature blast at the quarries had laid Mr. Graham low, and while he was on his sick bed, and scarcely in his right mind, Hiram Dunkirk had attended to the making of a will and several other matters. Of the will Paul knew but little. All he did know was that after his father had died and been buried their household effects had been disposed of at auction, and he had been taken to live at the Dunkirk place. Shortly after this the quarry company had failed, and he had been given to understand by Hiram Dunkirk that no such sum of money as he had hoped for would ever be his when he became of age.

If there was one thing which the orphan lad

loved it was music. His whole soul was wrapped up in that art, and every spare moment of his time was devoted to studying his music lessons and exercises, and in playing on his cornet. In his younger years he had taken piano lessons for several quarters, and his performance on that instrument was by no means bad. As to reading, he could take up any piece of music and read it at sight.

"Wants me to give up schooling and music and learn coopering, does he?" muttered Paul, as he gave the feed-box a savage kick with his heel. "Well, I just guess I won't do it. Joel Burgess is a regular skinflint, and I'd rather die than work for him. Mr. Dunkirk must either let me learn what I want or else I'll cut sticks and shift for myself, and that's flat!"

Having so concluded, Paul sprang to the floor and walked out of the barn. He was crossing the neglected garden when he saw Hiram Dunkirk stalking toward him. He was at first tempted to retreat, but on second thought he stood his ground.

"Paul, that was a nice way in which to treat me," said the old man, but his manner was so mild that the youth wondered at the change that had come over him.

"I didn't start the row, Mr. Dunkirk," he answered, hardly knowing what to say.

"You ought to have given me the horn when I asked for it."

"It was my horn—I paid for it."

"Everything that is yours is under my care until you are twenty-one, boy, remember that. However," Hiram Dunkirk cleared his throat, "I didn't come out to quarrel again. I want you to come down in the cellar and move those barrels of cider we were going to shift for a week back."

"All right, sir; I'm willing to do any work that is to be done," responded Paul promptly, in order to show that he stood ready to do all asked of him if treated right.

In silence the pair proceeded to the cellar under the house, a gloomy apartment, built of rough stone, with here and there a small window, with the panes of glass thick with dust and cobwebs. The cider barrels were six in number, and Hiram Dunkirk had once before spoken of rolling them from the upper end of the cellar to the lower.

"Put 'em right down alongside of the old meat closet," said the man. "Be careful how you handle 'em. I'll hold the lantern so you can see. There, that's it. Now the next."

One after another the barrels were rolled over and stood up as desired. The work made Paul sweat, and by the time it was finished he was pretty well fagged out.

"Now look around the closet and see if there

aint a smoked ham in the corner," went on Hiram Dunkirk. "Margy reckoned there was one there."

Not supecting the trap which had been laid for him, Paul entered the closet, which was built of oaken timber an inch and more thick. Hardly was he inside when the old man set down his lantern and slammed shut the door. The slipping of a heavy bolt into place followed.

"Now, Paul Graham, I reckon you'll stay there until we can come to terms," chuckled Hiram Dunkirk harshly. "You shan't have a mouthful to eat or drink until you are willing to promise that in the future you will do just what I want you to!"

CHAPTER III.

PAUL MAKES A MOVE.

It must be confessed that Paul had been taken by surprise, for he had not dreamed that his guardian would go so far as to make him a prisoner. For the moment he hardly knew what to say to such unusual treatment.

"So you are going to keep me locked up here?" he ventured, after an awkward silence.

"Yes, I am. I'll show you that I am your master," returned Hiram Dunkirk, more sourly than ever, now that he had the boy in his power.

"You have no right to lock me up in this fashion, Mr. Dunkirk."

"I reckon as your guardian I have a right to make you mind."

"I want you to let me out."

"I won't—not until you promise to give up your music and schooling and go to work for Joel Burgess as a decent boy should."

"I'll never promise that."

"Then ye can stay there and starve to death," growled the unreasonable old man. "Now,

don't you raise a row while I'm gone, or I'll come back with the snake-whip and take it out of your hide!"

With this threat Hiram Dunkirk took up his lantern, and Paul heard him lumber up the cellar stairs and shut and lock the upper door after him.

"Well, of all the brutes——" were the words which came to the youth's lips, and then he became silent, feeling that fault-finding would do no good. A minute later he had decided on a course of action. He would raise no row, but he would get out of his prison cell if such a thing could possibly be accomplished.

The old meat closet was about four feet square, and had been used for storing away salt and smoked meats previous to the building of a regular house outside, next to the dairy. On one side were a set of small shelves and on the other hooks and nails for hanging hams and shoulder pieces. The ham Hiram Dunkirk had mentioned was not there, and never had been, for the closet had been given over to the spiders and mice for a year and more.

In the darkness Paul felt around carefully, but could find no board which was loose enough to be pried off without tools. The oaken planks had not rotted, and the closet was as tight a box as one would hope to find.

His inspection of the sides finished, his next

move was to find out something about the flooring overhead. To reach this he took out the upper shelves before mentioned and stood upon a lower one. He could now touch several boards which formed part of the parlor floor, and among them was one which could be pried up with ease.

But now a new difficulty stood in his way. The parlor floor was covered with carpet, and to lift the entire piece up was out of the question. To even shove it up a few feet would have knocked down considerable furniture.

As Paul was deliberating upon what to do, and holding up an end of the board at the same time, there came a crash, and through a slit in the carpet he saw that a center table had overturned, carrying with it an unlighted lamp and half a dozen articles of bric-a-brac. The crash was followed almost immediately by the entrance of Mrs. Dunkirk into the room, who surveyed the scene in horror and amazement.

"Land sakes alive, what on airth is the meanin' of this!" burst from her trembling lips. "Paul Graham! Are ye trying to pull the house down?"

"I'm trying to get out of this meat closet!" he answered, with his head partly through the slit in the carpet. "Mr. Dunkirk had no right to lock me up."

"Take care—take care, or you'll have the car-

pet ruined!" she shrieked, for the carpet was her pride, having been bought new only the year before.

"If you don't want me to get out this way come and unlock the door," the boy returned coldly.

"I will! I will! Stop tearin' that seam! And the lamp smashed and the oil everywhere!" And with almost a moan she ran out of the room, to get the closet key, which Hiram Dunkirk had left hanging on a nail in the kitchen.

When she was gone Paul began to think rapidly. What if, instead of unlocking the door, she should summon her husband, who might come with his whip or a club, or even his shotgun? He resolved to run no chance, and hardly had she been gone five seconds when he enlarged the slit in the carpet seam and crawled forth into the room.

"What's the matter, Margy?" he heard Hiram Dunkirk exclaim from the kitchen door, and a confused murmur of voices followed. Waiting no longer, he opened a parlor window, leaped out, and made tracks toward the barn.

"Now, what's to do next?" Such was the question Paul asked himself, but an answer was not forthcoming. He felt a crisis had been reached in his life, but what the outcome would be there was no telling. On one matter, how-

ever, he was resolved. He would not go to work for that miserly skinflint, Joel Burgess.

"I'll run away and try my luck in Boston first," he muttered. "I'll be sure to find something to do—around a music store or in a musical instrument establishment, or somewhere. Hiram Dunkirk shan't make a slave of me. If he—— Here he comes now, and mad as a hornet, too!"

Paul was right; and, taking time by the forelock, the lad sprang out of sight and then climbed to the loft above, where he hid in the hay, beside the hidden cornet and music.

"Hang the luck!" were the first words he heard issuing from his guardian's lips. "Where under the sun's the boy gone to? Paul! Paul Graham! If you are around you had better give yourself up, unless you want to be skinned alive when I ketch ye!" he yelled.

"Thanks, I'm not giving myself up just yet!" murmured the youth. "You have got to cool off a good bit before I expose myself again."

Receiving no answer to his cries, Hiram Dunkirk began a hasty examination of the premises. He even mounted the ladder to the loft, and Paul held his breath. But the lad was not discovered; and in a minute more his guardian went down again.

"Did you find him, Hiram?" called out Mrs. Dunkirk, coming toward the barn with her broom

in hand. When aroused, the broom was her favorite weapon of offence.

"No, I didn't!" he growled. "He don't seem to be anywhere. Like as not he's run away."

"Well, I wish he'd run away and stay away," rejoined Mrs. Dunkirk. "The whole parlor carpet is sp'iled!"

"The carpet aint nothing!" fumed Hiram Dunkirk. "If that boy takes it into his head to do it, he can make me a lot of trouble, Margy."

"I don't see how he can, if he aint discovered nothing, Hiram."

"He may discover something, if he noses around long enough. Anderson Powell don't know much, but he may put the boy on the track of some other folks as does. If Barrett Radley should turn up——"

"Oh, but he's gone to Africky, aint he?"

"Yes. But folks sometimes come back, even from Africky. I would rather keep Paul under my thumb and know jest what he's a-doing," concluded Hiram Dunkirk.

Paul listened to the talk with absorbing attention. What did it all mean? How could he make trouble for his guardian by nosing around? What did some other folks know to Hiram Dunkirk's discredit?

He had heard of Barrett Radley before. He

was a speculator from New York who had once come up to Stoneville with some idea of buying out the quarries. But the deal had fallen through, and Barrett Radley had left immediately afterward.

The lad heard Hiram Dunkirk hitch up his mare to the road wagon. A short talk with his wife followed, and the old man drove off and Mrs. Dunkirk returned to the house.

Five minutes later Paul was sneaking toward the house with extreme caution. His mind was made up. He was going to quit the Dunkirk homestead and go out into the world to make his own way in whatever manner fortune would favor him. Some day, when he was in a position to do so, he would return and bring his guardian to account.

To enter the house unobserved proved easy, for Mrs. Dunkirk was busy in the parlor, removing the traces of the havoc which had been wrought. Slipping upstairs, Paul brought out a battered valise, and into it he stuffed the best of his clothing. Then, with the valise in one hand and his cornet and music in the other, he quitted the place as silently as he had entered.

He had broken off with the old mode of living. The whole world lay before him—and a series of surprising adventures in the bargain.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUNG CORNETIST.

“HEALTH, strength, and a capital of sixty-five cents,” was the way in which Paul summed up his resources as he strode along the stony road leading to the town, half a mile distant. “Health and strength are all right, but the capital is decidedly limited.”

As he walked along he kept his eyes open for the possible appearance of his guardian. But Hiram Dunkirk was nowhere to be seen.

Soon Stoneville was reached, and after a little hesitation Paul mounted the piazza of his music teacher's home. He was anxious to learn more of what Anderson Powell might know concerning the quarry company's affairs, and he also wanted his teacher's advice about his future movements.

A setback awaited him.

“Mr. Powell left for Boston this noon,” said the hired girl in charge. “He doesn't expect to get back before Wednesday or Thursday of next week.”

“One chance missed,” thought the youth, as

he walked away. "Now what is the next move to make?"

As he stood irresolute, he saw a gentleman rush up on the piazza he had just quitted and ring the bell vigorously.

"I would like to see Mr. Powell at once," said he, the moment the girl appeared.

"Sorry, sir, but he's away to Boston."

"Oh, pshaw! I wanted him to play the cornet for me to-night." The man hesitated and drew a long breath. "Do you know where I can find another cornet player? Any fairly good player will do."

"One of Mr. Powell's pupils was here a few minutes ago, sir. He might do, for he plays very nicely, so I've heard Mr. Powell say." The girl stepped out and looked up and down. "There he is now. Paul Graham!" she called.

"This girl tells me you can play the cornet," said the man, and now Paul recognized him as the owner of a show hall in Tipton, a town three miles south of Stoneville.

"Yes, sir, I can play fairly well," answered the lad, with interest.

"Can you read music?"

"If it is not very difficult—that is, at sight. Of course I can read anything with a little practicing."

"I mean ordinary pieces and dance music."

"I can get over that all right enough."

"Then you are just the person I am looking for. We have a theatrical entertainment at the Tipton Hall to-night, winding up with a dance. At the last moment the musicians disappointed me. I have managed to get a piano player, a violinist and a flutist, but I want a cornet to top things off. If you'll come over at once I'll give you two dollars."

Paul hesitated. Here was an opening when he had least expected it. More than that, Tipton was in the direction of Boston, for which he had intended to strike out.

"Come, what do you say? I haven't any time to spare. My horse and buggy are tied up over at the hotel."

"Two dollars is not enough," said the boy, seeing a fair chance of making more. "A regular theatrical job is worth three dollars, and with a dance afterward, five dollars."

"I wasn't calculating to pay a boy men's wages. However, I haven't time to argue the point. I'll give you four dollars and a supper—if you can do the work properly."

Paul accepted, and off the pair hurried to where the hall manager's turnout had been left. In a few minutes they were rattling along the Tipton road at a lively gait.

From Mr. Roscoe—such was the manager's

name—Paul learned that the play to be given was the familiar one of “Hazel Kirke,” that New York success which barn-storming companies have utilized to the utmost for a number of years. The cue music, he was told, was very simple, and popular airs were to be given between the acts. Dancing was to begin immediately after the conclusion of the show. A dance after the play, although unknown to city theatrical-goers, is very popular in certain country localities.

It was after six o'clock when Tipton was reached and they alighted at the hall. Paul had had no supper, but with the promise of a good meal later on he did not complain. He was at once introduced to the other musicians that had gathered, and no time was lost by the piano player and leader in starting in on a rehearsal.

Even in such ordinary company Paul felt a bit nervous at first, for this was his first appearance in public. But Anderson Powell's training had been careful and thorough, and he did very well, much better, in fact, than the flutist, who could read but little and who was inclined to “vamp”—that is, play by ear—in consequence. In one of the cues Paul had to reach several notes which were high for a B-flat cornet, but he struck them fairly, and this pleased the leader, Carl Ross, very much.

“You vos all right, mine poy,” said he, in

broken English. "You vos do besser as dot flute blayer vot can't blay at all."

Some of the company were rehearsing on the stage, and between these people and the orchestra there was a good deal of confusion. By the time the cues and a few popular airs were gone over it was time to "wind up" and throw open the doors to the general public.

Manager Roscoe had advertised his attraction well in Tipton, Stoneville, and a number of other places, and soon the hall began to fill up, for theatrical attractions did not number over a dozen a winter in the vicinity, and not a dance had been given in over two weeks. By eight o'clock, the time to start, every seat was filled and standing room was pretty well crowded.

For an opening the orchestra leader had selected one of Sousa's stirring marches. In this there was lots of work for the cornet, and work of no mean order, as anybody who has ever played Sousa's music knows.

"All ready?" whispered the leader, with a look around. There was no reply, and with a wave of his hand and a crash on the piano the march struck up—and Paul Graham's career as a public player could be said to have fairly begun.

Everyone played with spirit, and Paul's cornet drowned out many of the mistakes made by the flutist. The pianist and violinist did well.

Paul went at his work with a swing and a dash which would have been creditable to an experienced professional, and before the first part of the march was finished half of the audience were keeping time with their feet. When at last the march came to an end there was a generous clapping of hands, a stamping of feet, and several were heard to say: "That was fine, wasn't it?" "Say, but couldn't a fellow march all day to that?" and so forth.

A number of people from Stoneville who knew Paul had recognized him, and they were much astonished to see him sitting there performing his part with the ease and grace of one who had done such things for years.

"He's a born musician," whispered one lady to another. "Mr. Powell said so."

"I wonder if he's going to make music a business?" questioned another. "I shouldn't think that crabbed old Hiram Dunkirk would let him. They haven't even a melodeon in the house."

"He's not going to be a musician," put in a man sitting near. "He's going to learn the coopering trade; Joel Burgess told me so this noon."

"Heaven pity him if he's got to work for old Joel Burgess!" answered the first lady, and then followed a silence, as the orchestra struck up on

the first cue and the curtain rolled up on the opening act of "Hazel Kirke."

Although the theatrical company would not have made a hit in a large city, it was composed of fairly good performers, and the play proceeded to the entire satisfaction of the audience, who brought out sweet Hazel and the lover, and also the blind miller, a number of times as an encore. When the wind-up came, and the villain was defeated and the lovers made happy, the applause shook the building, and continued even while the company were getting out of their stage dresses and the supers were clearing away the benches for the dance to follow.

Half an hour later the orchestra, piano and all, had been transferred to the stage, and the dance was in full swing, when, on chancing to look toward the main entrance to the place, Paul saw a sight which filled him with surprise and dismay. Hiram Dunkirk had just entered, followed by Joel Burgess and by Miles Cross, one of the Stoneville constables.

The orchestra was playing the finale of a schottische. How he wound up his part Paul could not tell, but by the time he had finished the three men were at his side. Catching him by the shoulder, Hiram Dunkirk dragged him back.

"So I have found you, have I?" he said

sternly. "Pretty goings-on, these, I must say! Miles, do your duty."

"But hadn't we better argy the p'int?" suggested the Stoneville constable. "He may not be guilty, you know."

"Oh, but he is guilty!" insisted Hiram Dunkirk. "I'm sure of it, and so is my wife; likewise Mrs. Potter, our neighbor, who saw him coming out of the house with a valise."

"Guilty of what?" demanded Paul, feeling something unusual was in the air. "I am guilty of running away, Mr. Dunkirk, if that is what you mean. I'm not going back, either, if I can help it," he added warmly.

"But you are going back—and with the constable, too, Paul Graham!" cried Hiram Dunkirk. "And what's more, it won't do you no good to play the innocent. Mrs. Potter saw you coming out of the house with the valise after I left for Joel Burgess' place."

"I don't deny I came out of the house with the valise."

"Ha! what did I tell you?" cried the old man, turning in triumph to those with him. "He's a villain, but he can't back down in the face of the evidence against him."

"The valise was mine, and I took only such things as belong to me," continued Paul, thinking he saw the drift of matters.

“ You did not—you took more—a good deal more. You broke open the desk in the sitting room and stole four hundred and fifty dollars!” almost screamed Hiram Dunkirk. “ Miles, don’t you let him git away! Unless he gives up the money at once he shall go to State’s prison for his outrageous crime!”

CHAPTER V.

A LEAP IN THE DARK.

FOR the moment after he was accused Paul Graham could not believe the evidence of his own ears. Here he was charged with stealing four hundred and fifty dollars from a desk in the Dunkirk sitting room, and either he must give up the money or go to State's prison for the crime.

He had never opened the desk mentioned, which his guardian always kept locked, and he had certainly never seen such an amount of cash as that he was accused of taking. For the moment he stared in bewilderment at the trio of men before him; then, as his eyes searched the crafty features of Hiram Dunkirk, he stepped forward and shook his fist in the old man's face.

"Mr Dunkirk, you are a thorough villain, not I," he said loudly and distinctly. "I never touched a cent of your money, and you know it. You treated me so meanly that I had to run away from your place, and now you want to drag me back by accusing me of a crime that was never

committed. If you were not the old man that you are I would knock you down where you stand!"

"You—you—this to me!" stammered Hiram Dunkirk, falling back several paces.

"Yes, that to you. I repeat, I never touched a cent of your money—but you have touched many a dollar belonging to me," added Paul significantly.

"I haven't—not a dollar—leastwise not in a way but what was perfectly lawful," growled Hiram Dunkirk, his face whitening. "And I have always treated you better than you deserved—all the neighbors know that. You took the money, and you must give it back." The old man began to recover his self-possession. "Miles, see to it he don't give you the slip."

"He shan't run away," answered the Stoneville constable. "Paul, if you have the money, you had better give it up and go back home with your guardian," he continued in a friendly tone, for he had known the boy for several years, and he liked the lad.

"I never touched it—don't believe he had any such amount in the house," was the earnest answer. "You ought to know me better than that, Miles Cross."

"Well, I thought I did," faltered the constable. "But he did have the money, for Joel Burgess here says he paid it over for a town lot only yes—

terday, and your guardian took it home to keep until he went to the bank. And now it's gone, and somebody must have taken it."

The scene had attracted considerable attention, and the parties interested were now surrounded by the hall manager, the other musicians, and a goodly number of the men who were participating in the dance.

"Accuses the young cornet player of stealing four hundred dollars, does he? Well, that's rather serious."

So spoke Roscoe, the manager, and many agreed with him. The piano player shook his head dubiously.

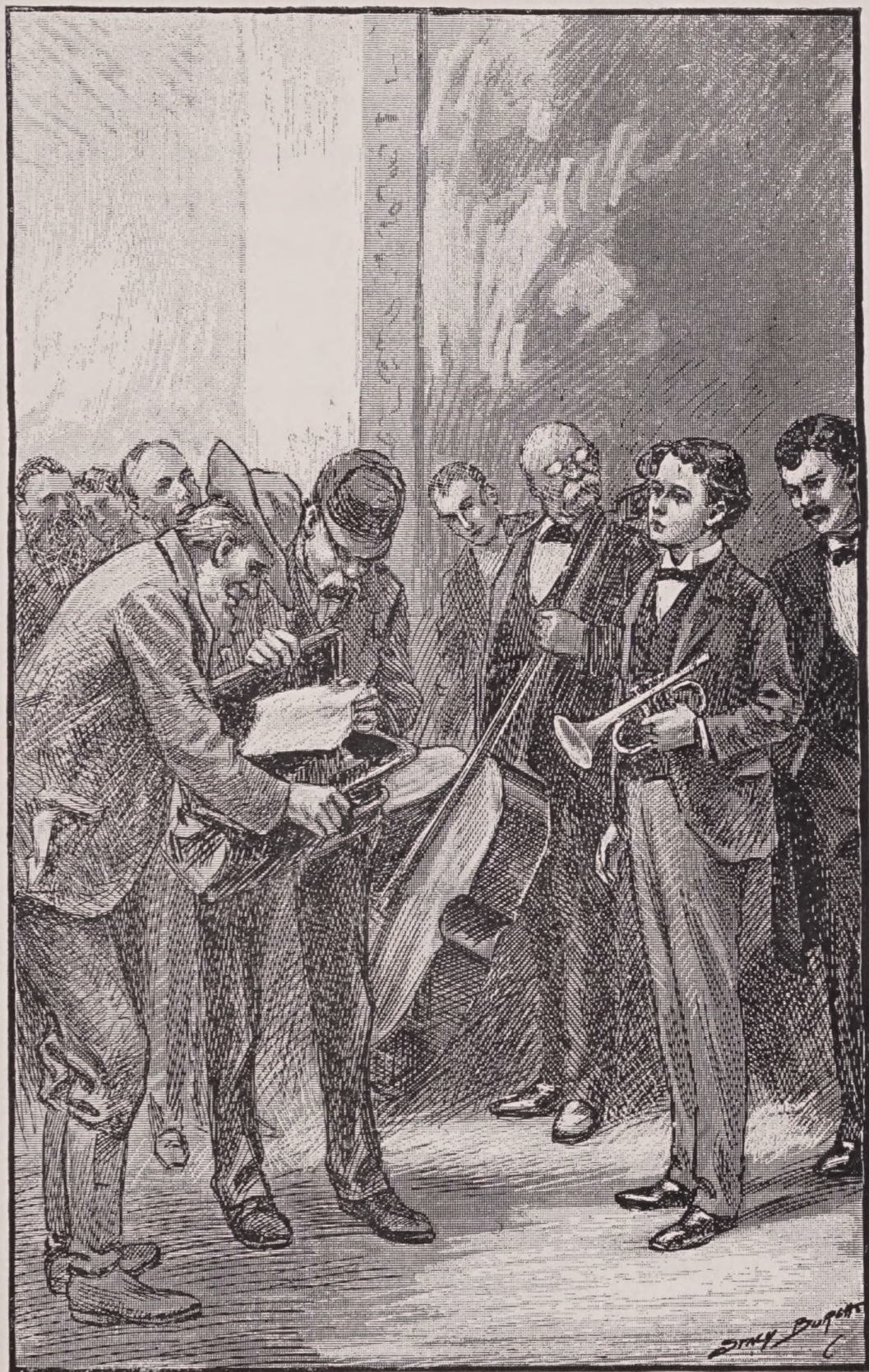
"I dinks he no blay no more dis efening," he said. "Und he vos der best blayer of der lot!"

"Where is his valise?" put in Joel Burgess, who up to this point had remained silent.

"My valise is over in yonder corner," answered Paul. "It is not locked. You may search it to your heart's content."

The bag was brought forward and thrown open. Of course nothing but Paul's clothing and some music books were found. Hiram Dunkirk's face took on a more sour look than ever.

"He has hid the money somewhere," he said. "Take him off to the Stoneville lock-up, Miles, and I reckon we'll make him tell us where it is later."



THE SEARCH FOR THE STOLEN MONEY. P. 34.

"I'm sorry for you, Paul, but I've got to do my duty; so come along," said the constable.

The boy's first impulse was to break away and run, but on second thought he quietly submitted, and amid a hubbub of voices the little party left the hall, Paul carrying his cornet and music, and Hiram Dunkirk the valise.

Down in the street stood Dunkirk's box wagon, containing two seats. Into this the three men and the boy piled, Hiram Dunkirk and Burgess on the front seat and the constable and Paul behind. Gathering up the reins and the whip, Hiram Dunkirk started the turnout for Stoneville and the local lock-up.

It was now nearly midnight, and as there was no moon and but few stars the night was dark. The road was a lonely one, over several hills and down into as many hollows, and for a good portion of the distance was lined on either side with dense woods.

"If you took that money to Tipton with you, you might as well own up," suggested Joel Burgess, after a short ride in silence.

"I didn't take the money, and don't believe it was stolen," answered Paul, and after that he would say no more, although all three of the men did their best to "pump" him.

The truth was, Paul was trying to figure out what would be the best move to make next. To

submit quietly to being locked up was out of the question. Once in the grasp of the law, he felt certain his guardian would do all in his power to make out a case against him. "By having me convicted he'll think it will be out of my power to proceed against him," thought the lad bitterly, and in this he was more than half right.

About half the distance to Stoneville had been covered when the wagon reached the top of a steep hill and Hiram Dunkirk commenced to drive the mare down the opposite side with needed care.

"Easy now, Bess!" he called out. "Don't go too fast in the dark, or you'll break your neck and our necks too! Plague on the critter! Easy now, I say, easy!"

Away rattled the box wagon down the rough road. As it bumped along Paul felt that his most favorable chance for escape had come. He still held his cornet and music. Now, reaching under the forward seat, he secured his valise.

"Good-by, Miles Cross!" he cried, and shoved the constable over upon Joel Burgess. Then he made a wild leap into the dark, clearing the wagon and landing in a patch of ferns and tall grasses. His foot struck a stone, and picking it up he hurled it at the mare, hitting her in the flank and causing her to bound along with more speed than ever.

"Hi, stop him!" he heard the constable yell, and as soon as he could the man leaped after Paul.

"What's up?" cried Dunkirk, not daring to look back. "Gone! Hang the luck! Whoa, Bess, whoa, or you'll smash the wagon to bits! Stop huggin' me, Joel! Hold fast to the seat."

"We'll be killed!" whined the frightened cooper. "Whoa! whoa! you crazy beast. Give me the lines. Whoa! If I—— Oh!"

Joel Burgess' speech came to a sudden termination as the wagon swerved to one side and hit a large boulder. Up he went into the air, to be flung several yards. When he came down it was in the midst of a prickly blackberry bush, and his yells of pain could be heard a quarter of a mile off. The turnout went on, but in half a minute more Hiram Dunkirk had the mare under control, and the mad dash down the hill came to an end.

In the meantime Paul was not inactive. In throwing the stone he had dropped the valise, but now this was again secured, and away he went into the woods as fast as his legs could carry him.

In days gone by Paul had often hunted for birds and rabbits in this same territory, so he was not as much at a disadvantage as he might otherwise have been. Yet in the darkness he had many a dangerous tumble, and once he brought up against a tree trunk with such force that he

was almost stunned. But he kept on until he felt sure that he was safe from pursuit.

Then he sat down on a fallen tree trunk to listen. Far away he heard a murmur of voices mingled with the rustling of the wind through the trees and the occasional cry of a night bird. But the voices came no nearer, and in less than half an hour died out altogether.

Cold and hungry, Paul arose and continued on his way through the woods. If his heart had been heavy before, it was now like a lump of lead in his bosom. He was homeless, friendless, dollarless, and the shadow of a crime hung over his fair name.

"Tough luck doesn't describe it," he murmured. "But never mind, some day I'll be in a position to defend myself, and then I'll bring Hiram Dunkirk to justice, see if I don't!"

Feeling it would not be wise to show himself either in the vicinity of Stoneville or Tipton, Paul struck out for the town of Woburn, situated about twelve miles northwest of Boston. In this place of over fifteen thousand inhabitants he felt he would be, for a short time at least, safe.

The tramp through the woods lasted the best part of an hour, when he struck the Woburn road at a point half a mile out of town. Here walking was much easier, and he pushed on with in-

creased speed until a cry from a distance attracted his attention.

“Help! Help! Thieves! Help!”

The cry came from a tiny farmhouse, set in a cluster of apple trees. The voice was that of an elderly woman, and, without stopping to think twice, Paul dashed off in that direction, to ascertain what was the matter.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY.

“HELP! Help! Stop, you thieves, or I will fire upon you!”

“Shut up, old woman! There is nobody around here to help you, and if you don’t stop your cat-cries I’ll bind and gag you,” came the gruff answer from a burly rascal who had just entered the kitchen of the little farmhouse.

“But, sir, what do you want here?” tremblingly asked the old woman, who was past sixty years of age. “I have nothing here that is worth stealing.”

“Haven’t you, though?” put in a second fellow, who had come in close behind his companion. “We want you to give us some food, an’ be quick about it,” he added, with an ugly glance around.

“I have but little in the house, but what there is you can have,” replied the old woman. “There is some smoked meat, and some cold potatoes, and beans——”

“Hear her!” cried the leader of the pair. “As if we would feed on cold pertaters, Wompy!”

“We aint feedin’ on pertaters—not when we have over four hundred dollars to burn, Muggs,” answered Wompy. “Stir yer stumps, old woman, and get us the best feed the farm affords. Kill a chicken and make us some fresh biscuits, and——”

“Have ye got any liquor?” burst in Muggs. “I’m powerful dry, I am.”

“There is no liquor in the house excepting a little cider, and that——”

“Trot out the cider, then; it’s better nor nuthin’. Hold on, I’ll scoot off and watch the neighbors,” went on Muggs. “Wompy, jest take a look around while I’m gone,” he added, with a wink of his bleared black eye.

“I will, bet yer life,” said Wompy, and started to walk through the kitchen to the parlor.

As this movement meant nothing short of robbery, it aroused the old lady, whose name was Abigail Darrow. She was standing close to the big open fireplace, and, with remarkable quickness for one so old, she caught up the heavy fire-tongs and went after Wompy.

“You shan’t rob me!” she shrieked, and brought down the fire-tongs upon Wompy’s head with such a force that the rascal dropped more than half senseless at her feet.

But now Muggs sprang in, and was just about to catch Abigail Darrow by the throat, when he

felt a strong, youthful hand on his shoulder and the next instant found himself tripped up and lying flat on his back, with Paul sitting on top of him.

"Oh!" he grunted. "Let—let me up! Who are you?"

"Never mind who I am," answered the boy. "You keep still, unless you want to be hammered into submission. The idea of your coming in here to rob this old lady! Have you a rope, madam, so I can bind him?"

"Yes! yes! Here is a washline!" burst in Abigail Darrow hastily. The unexpected entrance of Paul had startled her, but his actions showed that he was friendly, and now was no time to ask questions. She threw the line in question to the boy, who essayed to bind Muggs' hands behind him.

This was no easy work, for Muggs, although nothing but a tramp, was tall and powerful. Over and over rolled the pair on the floor, until Abigail Darrow brought matters to a crisis by again using the fire-tongs and hitting Muggs a severe blow on the neck. This dazed the rascal, and in a minute more Paul had him tangled up in the washline and tied fast to a heavy oaken rocking chair.

By this time Wompy was staggering to his feet. There was a wild glare in his bloodshot eyes, and

as quick as a flash he caught up a knife from the table.

“ I’ll fix yer fer dat ! ” he cried, and rushed first at the old woman, who retreated before him, and then at Paul, who he thought must be attached to the household.

“ Stand back ! ” ordered Paul, and placed the kitchen table between himself and his would-be assailant. Glancing around for a weapon of some sort his eyes alighted on a smoothing iron, and catching it up he let drive at Wompy’s head. His aim was true, and the fellow went down once more, but this time knocked out completely.

“ Oh ! ” shrieked Abigail Darrow in alarm. “ I hope you haven’t killed him ! ”

“ No, he’s far from dead,” answered Paul, also alarmed, and after a hasty examination. “ I guess we had better bind him, too, and then I’ll call in the nearest neighbor. These rascals ought to be lock——”

Paul did not finish. In the struggle with Muggs a flat object had dropped from the rascal’s pocket. The youth caught sight of it, gave a cry, and leaping forward secured it.

It was a long, old-fashioned pocketbook belonging to Hiram Dunkirk !

Paul had seen the wallet a number of times, and knew it well. Like a flash he realized the truth.

He pulled the pocketbook open. It was stuffed with ten- and twenty-dollar bills.

"Oh, my gracious, look at the money!" gasped Abigail Darrow, who had not seen so much cash before in her life.

"This money belongs to Hiram Dunkirk of Stoneville," answered Paul soberly. "His house was robbed only yesterday afternoon."

"Hiram Dunkirk? The man that was interested in the stone quarries?"

"Yes."

"I've heard of him. How do you know this pocketbook is his?"

"I've seen the pocketbook before. He was robbed of four hundred and fifty dollars. Let us see if the entire amount is here."

Taking out the bills, Paul counted them rapidly, the old woman looking on with great interest. The four hundred and fifty dollars were intact.

"You must be right, young man. And to think these tramps did the deed! They'll go to State's prison for it. But you have helped me a splendid lot here, and I shan't forget it of you. May I ask what your name is?"

"Paul Graham. Mr. Dunkirk, who was robbed, was my guardian."

"Indeed! Then it will be a feather in your cap, this getting back his money for him."

"That remains to be seen, Miss——"

"Abigail Darrow, at your service," and the old woman made an old-fashioned courtesy.

"As I said, Miss Darrow, it remains to be seen. I don't mind telling you that I have just run away from Mr. Dunkirk's house. He accused me of stealing this very money I have just got back for him."

Abigail Darrow stared in amazement.

"Why, it's like a story, Paul Graham! And it's just come out right, for now you can go back and——"

"I shall never go back," interrupted the youth firmly. "He treated me worse than a dog, and now I intend to leave this neighborhood and fight my own way through the world."

"But the money——"

"You can return that to him, and explain how it was recovered. Now I guess I had better go off after one of the neighbors before these rascals get into a fighting mood again."

At these words from Paul, Muggs braced up and opened the bleary eyes, which had been closed.

"See here, boy, I wants ter talk to yer afore ye go," he muttered gruffly.

"So you've come around, have you?"

"Yes, I have, an' I wants ter know wot this fairy story about a pocketbook with money is."

"It's no fairy story, for I have the pocketbook and the money right here."

"But you said somethin' about the money bein' stolen."

"So it was—by you and your worthless companion."

"See here, ye can't shift that crime onto our shoulders. I don't know nuthin' about a pocket-book, nor any money either," went on Muggs boldly.

"What!" ejaculated Paul.

"Nary a word, an' you can't make us out sech thieves. Of course we came in here on that old lady, but that was only because we was starvin' an' wanted somethin' to eat. Takin' somethin' to eat when yer stomach's a-grumblin' like all fury aint nigh so bad as robbin' a gent of his money."

"But you dropped the pocketbook on the floor during our struggle," insisted Paul.

"Not much I didn't. That pocketbook fell from yer own pocket—I seed it with me own eyes, an' me pard seen it too, I kin swear to it. Hi, Wompy!"

"Wha—what?" stammered the other tramp, who was just recovering.

"Dis young feller says we stole a pocketbook wid four hundred an' fifty dollars in it. I say we don't know anyt'in' about it, an' he must have stole it himself. Aint dat right?"

"Dat's wot it is, Muggs. I never had no

pocketbook wid money in it," answered Wompy. "We never took anyt'ing but grub in our whole lives."

Paul turned appealingly toward Abigail Darrow.

"Miss Darrow, you saw me pick the pocket-book up from the floor, didn't you?" he said.

"Oh, yes!"

"And you saw Muggs drop it, didn't you?" went on the youth earnestly.

"Well, I—I—no, I can't say that I did," faltered the old maid, and the reply caused Paul's heart to sink as never before. Like a flash he realized that although the stolen money was recovered, to prove his innocence would be impossible.

CHAPTER VII.

PAUL MAKES A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

"You didn't see it?"

"No, I did not. You see——"

"Hullo, there, Miss Darrow! What's up?"

The call and question came from outside of the cottage. Much startled, Paul turned, and so did the woman, to discover two men standing near the partly open door. One of the newcomers held a heavy driving whip in his hand.

"Oh, Mr. Simonson, is it you?" cried Abigail Darrow joyfully. "Come in; you are much needed. Here are two tramps who came to rob me——"

"Only came for somethin' to eat," whined Muggs, and Wompy muttered words to the same effect.

"Tramps, eh?" said Ruel Simonson, who was a neighbor. "It's lucky I and Bob were driving past so early in the morning. I see you have one of 'em bound."

"This young man did that. He helped me wonderfully," answered Abigail Darrow.

“Why, it’s Paul Graham, the fellow who was arrested at Tipton last night!” ejaculated Bob Simonson, who, it may as well be stated, had attended the performance of “Hazel Kirke” and the dance that followed. “How did you get off?”

Paul’s face flushed.

“I was not guilty, and ran away. We have found Mr. Dunkirk’s money, which these tramps took,” he continued.

“We didn’t take the money—the boy stole it!” burst out Muggs.

“Thet’s jest wot the boy did!” chimed in Wompy.

“Why, I—really—I don’t understand,” stammered Ruel Simonson. “What money are you talking about?”

“This pocketbook full,” answered Abigail Darrow. “After the struggles with the tramps Paul Graham picked it up from the floor. He says the tramps stole it, and they say he is guilty. For my part, I think the boy tells the truth.”

“Don’t you be too sure of that, Miss Darrow,” put in Bob Simonson. “I was talking to Joel Burgess about the lad, and the cooper said he was a regular good-for-nothing, and Hiram Dunkirk was having more than his hands full with him. Like as not Dunkirk was right about the boy being the thief, and now he is sorry for his work, and is

trying to shift the responsibility onto somebody else's shoulders."

"That's it exactly!" cried Muggs, overjoyed to find a champion to help him out. "You've struck the nail square on the head, boss. I'm only a poor man, traveling around lookin' fer work, but I never stole anything in my life exceptin' something to eat, an' yer can't much blame a man fer that."

"You make the boy come along, too, if you're going to take us to the lock-up," put in Wompy. "There aint no doubt but wot you'll find him the biggest criminal o' the three."

"Will you go along with us?" demanded Ruel Simonson, turning to Paul.

The youth hesitated. If he went, how could he hope to clear himself, with everybody against him? He shook his head.

"No, I won't go," he answered, backing toward the door. "Good-by, Miss Darrow. Some day I'll prove my innocence." And the next instant he was gone.

Bob Simonson ran after him. But the young farmer was clumsy of foot and tired out after his many dances at the Tipton Hall, and Paul easily outdistanced him. Long before Woburn was reached the pursuer gave up the chase, and then Paul dropped into a walk.

"Put my foot into it again," sighed the youth,

as he entered the town. "It does beat the nation what luck I am having. I wonder what Hiram Dunkirk will say when he gets his money back. I'll wager he'll be more sure than ever that I took it. I declare the miserly fellow don't deserve to have a cent of it returned. For all I know, the money may belong to me. Certainly he has got some cash of mine. If only I could find out how much."

The main street of Woburn reached, Paul continued on his way at a slower gait than ever. By a clock in a jeweler's window he saw that it was a little after four in the morning. Here and there a milkman, baker, or huckster was stirring, but otherwise the town was still asleep.

Being now more than hungry, he hailed a passing baker and purchased from him several fresh rolls, which he devoured with avidity. It was not a heavy meal, but it was better than nothing, and once more Paul felt more like himself. Thinking it would be folly to remain in Woburn, he struck out along the highway leading to Cambridge.

He was just passing a hotel near the end of the town when a row on the piazza attracted his attention. Two waiters were running out an individual dressed in a suit of loud checks. The individual wore patent-leather shoes, a mouse-colored derby hat, a flaring red necktie, and shirt,

collar, and cuffs which were as stiff as a board and displayed nearly all the colors of the rainbow.

"Now go along with you!" cried one of the waiters wrathfully. "You can't come any of your sly tricks on this establishment. Skip!"

"But, my dear man," came in a rich, mellow voice from the person who was being bounced, "this is extraordinary—simply extraordinary. Never before have I been thus shabbily treated, and——"

"We don't want no more words," put in the second waiter. "The boss is onto you; so sneak!"

"Ah, well, such is life. We won't quarrel, my dear fellows. I will go. But some day, when I have grown famous, when my name is in every newspaper and upon every lip, your unworthy master will be sorry he turned the cold shoulder to Horatio Calliwax, musician, impersonator, and master of the mysterious black art. Farewell, and may the dogs of war forgive you!"

And having thus delivered himself, with many a wave of his long, bony hands, Horatio Calliwax strode away from the hotel, his head erect, his blue eyes flashing, and with every appearance of a well-to-do man of the word who had been unjustly used.

Fifty steps away he almost bumped into Paul,

who had paused to learn what was up and who the strange individual could be.

"Oh, ah, excuse me, my son," said Horatio Calliwax, as he stared hard at Paul. "Where—ah—where did you spring from?"

"I didn't spring from anywhere—I was just walking along." Paul could not suppress a grin.

"You are laughing at me, sir! Did you—ah—witness the outrageous scene just enacted upon yonder hotel piazza?"

"I did."

"It was extraordinary—malicious, simply abominable!"

"What did they eject you for?"

"Ah, what for—that is the question. I have run short of cash, and as a small favor I requested the barkeeper to remember me for several drinks and the hotel keeper to furnish me with lodging until I should receive a remittance from New York. Neither would listen to me—and as I had had one drink they—they—well, you know the rest. It was simply atrocious!"

"Hard lines, that's a fact."

"Before I stopped here I thought it might be better to go right through to Boston," continued the loudly-attired individual. "I wish I had kept on—now," and he put his hands behind him under his coat tails, where the toe of the hotel keeper's boot had planted itself with much force.

"I am on my way to Boston!" cried Paul, before thinking twice.

"Indeed? On foot?"

"Yes, unless I can catch a ride."

"Then, supposing we journey together—it will be more pleasant than striding on in solitude. I like company—bright faces, laughter, good times—and yet I am at times melancholy. But that is part of my nature, for I have seen many ups and downs in life, mostly downs, I must confess. My name is Horatio Calliwax, and I am an actor, musician, magician, juggler, and impersonator of well-known characters. I was lately attached to the Bushnell Extravaganza Combination, but we went to pieces at Lowell, and ever since I have been trying to make my way back to Boston or New York. Now, having so thoroughly introduced myself, may I ask who it is is going to honor me with his company on this pilgrimage?"

Paul laughed. "If it's an honor to walk with me, all right," he answered, and gave his name. "I'm bound for Boston just to see if I can't get something to do. I am something of a cornet and piano player, but I am willing to turn my hand to anything that is honest."

"A professional like myself. Shake!" Horatio Calliwax thrust out his hand. "And both in misfortune—or you, too, would not be making

the journey on foot. Ah, well, life is like a teeter-board, and if we are down at one end of it, we know that someone is up at the other. Let us shake the dust of this inhospitable town from our feet!"

And linking his arm into that of Paul, Horatio Calliwax strode off, and there was nothing left for Paul to do but to go with him.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ENGAGEMENT IN BOSTON.

PAUL had not been walking with Horatio Calliwx more than an hour when he felt convinced that the rather singular man was on the whole a pretty good fellow. His dress and his manner were both against him, and yet, at the bottom, Calliwx had a good heart and was well-meaning to the last degree. His one weakness was to live well, even when down on his luck, and this had brought him into more than one serious difficulty. The way from Lowell to Woburn was strewn with hotel bills which the actor-musician meant to pay some day, but at present the man had not so much as a dime in his pocket.

“My effects were attached at Billerica,” he confessed. “A trunk full of clothing, a magician’s outfit, and the alto horn which I blew in the band when we paraded the streets. It was too bad! I tried to save them, especially the magician’s outfit and the horn, but the hotelkeeper was stony-hearted and would not let them go.”

“It’s hard to lose your tools in trade,” answered Paul. “I want to hang fast to my cornet.”

“Do you read music?”

“Oh, yes!”

“So do I, and that is more than can be said of most of those who were attached to the Bushnell Combination. Why, we had a bass player and a trombone player who ‘vamped’ something fearful to contemplate. They could only play six tunes, and so the whole band wasn’t allowed to play anything else.” Horatio Calliwax laughed lightly. “If you read well, you ought to be able to get an opening in Boston.”

“I would like to join some band that travels. It seems to me it would be much more pleasant than to be stationed in one place.”

“It is—if you are certain you won’t be stranded, as I was. I am from New York, but I know a number of musical and theatrical people in Boston, and if I can do anything for you, command me,” concluded Horatio Calliwax.

By this time it was growing light and a number of farm and other wagons began to show themselves on the road. Seeing this, Horatio Calliwax looked around, and, espying a bit of broken glass, picked it up.

“It shall provide us with a ride,” he said. And then, as Paul looked at him incredulously, he added: “It is a trick I have played often—perfectly harmless, and it never yet failed to work.”

He stopped his companion at the roadside

and watched while several wagons jogged by. Presently a large turnout hove in sight, drawn by two horses. On the seat sat a pleasant-faced man, who was more than half asleep.

"Hi, there, whoa!" called out Horatio Calliwax, rushing forward and stopping the team. "What's the matter with your horse, sir?" he asked, addressing the driver.

"Matter? I don't know," stammered the man, rousing up. "What is the matter?"

By this time Horatio Calliwax was back of one of the animals and had raised a rear leg. He put down his hand and felt under the hoof. He pretended to pull away at something for several seconds, then held up the bit of broken glass.

"By gosh!" ejaculated the countryman. "Whar did Tom pick that up? Much obleeged to ye, stranger."

"Not at all, sir," answered Horatio Calliwax pleasantly. "By the way, can you tell me and my friend how far it is to Cambridge?"

"Close on to five miles."

"Are you going there?"

"Ye-es." And then, as the countryman noted how Horatio Calliwax looked at Paul in a hesitating way, he continued: "Want a ride?"

"I don't know as I would mind," murmured the actor-musician, as though the thought was new to him. "What do you say, Paul? It's

nice enough to walk, but we are losing precious time, remember."

"Better hop up," went on the countryman, and in a moment Horatio Calliwax was in the wagon and Paul quickly followed. The boy did not dare look Calliwax in the face for fear of laughing outright over the rather questionable trick which had been played.

Long before noon they entered Cambridge, and here the countryman dropped them off on a main street corner. Walking down this street to the Charles River, they crossed the West Boston bridge, and half an hour later were in the heart of the Hub.

"Let us walk over to the Globe Theater," said Horatio Calliwax. "I have a friend in the vicinity who is connected with a musical bureau. Perhaps he can put us on the track of an engagement."

Paul was willing, and walking down Joy Street they crossed the beautiful Common and made their way to the theater mentioned. The musical bureau was but a few doors up the block, on the third story of a handsome stone building. They soon gained the place, and Horatio Calliwax asked for Mr. Lewis Bardbury.

"No longer connected with this bureau," answered the clerk in charge. "And I can't tell you where he is," he continued, before the actor-

musician could ask any further questions. The clerk was busy, and with heavy hearts Calliwax and Paul descended into the street.

"First failure," sighed the boy. "Now what's to do?"

"Thrown, but not vanquished," smiled Horatio Calliwax. "Come on up to the theatrical agencies."

During the next two hours four agencies were visited. At one place Calliwax met several men who knew him. But these men could not help him, nor had they anything to offer Paul. At the other places they were told that no openings were on the books.

"It looks black, I must confess," said Horatio Calliwax. "But do not despair—the skies will yet brighten." He looked at Paul hesitatingly. "I am getting hungry. You haven't—ah—the price of a dinner for both of us with you, have you?"

"I've got sixty-five cents, all told. I'm willing to spend thirty cents of it—fifteen apiece. The rest we had best save for future use."

"Good; I see you are a financier, which I never was. Come on—I know a cheap restaurant, where food is good," and Calliwax led the way without delay. The restaurant was on a side street, close to the doors of a variety theater.

While the two were stowing away some beef

and beans, and washing it down with coffee, their attention was attracted to the somewhat excited talking going on between three men who sat at a table near by.

"I won't play cornet for him any more, unless he throws off that fine," one man was saying. "I wasn't any more drunk than he was."

"Carson is too dictatorial," put in a second man. "He has got a pretty good act, and it has given him the swelled head."

"He won't find anybody to assist him as I have done," went on the first man, who was even now more than half tipsy.

"The trouble is with Hicks, the manager. What right had he to discharge me? Lots of actors have smoked in the wings before this."

And so the grumbling went on, Paul and Horatio Calliwax listening with increased interest. As soon as the meal was disposed of the actor-musician tapped Paul on the arm.

"Come on; I think I scent an opening, and there is nothing like being the first man on the ground," he whispered, and the two left the restaurant as quickly as they could.

"Hicks is the manager of the variety house close by," explained Calliwax. "Those men have been discharged for cause. Let us go and see Hicks and the man Carson they mentioned."

They walked around to the stage door.

Luckily, Maurice Hicks was on hand. Although an utter stranger, Calliwax grasped him warmly by the hand.

"Don't you remember me, Mr. Hicks?" he said. "I used to be with the Oriental Specialty Company and with Dan Leary's Burlesquers—played to crowded houses in Boston three years ago. My name is Horatio Calliwax, and this is my friend Paul Graham. He is a cornet player and I am an all-round actor, magician, musician, and impersonator. We heard something about an opening here, and dropped in to see what our chances might be."

Horatio Calliwax could put on a good "front" when necessary, and his earnest manner was quite impressive. Maurice Hicks scratched his head, and then sent for Andrew Carson, a high-class variety performer. Soon the particulars of what the newcomers could do were ascertained in detail. Carson took Paul to one side.

"I don't know but what you are the boy I've been looking for," he said. "I had a man helping me, but he got drunk. I like a boy better. I do some juggling with a lot of brass instruments, and then play on one after another, and my assistant helps me. I'll try you and give you eight dollars a week. Come on the stage."

A rehearsal was soon in full swing. What Paul was called on to do was easy, and Carson

commented favorably on his playing. "That's all," said the variety performer. "Be on hand at six-thirty sharp to-night."

The two had left the stage during this conversation and were now in a little side room, piled high with stage property. At one end was a window, looking out on a yard back of the restaurant. As Paul happened to glance toward the window he saw a man peering in at him. The fellow was the cornet player Carson had discharged. His face was full of chagrin and hatred, and ere the man disappeared he shook his fist at Paul.

"He'll be no friend to me," thought the boy; and a minute later joined Horatio Calliwax. The actor-magician had managed to get an opening as an impersonator at twelve dollars per week, for two weeks, and was correspondingly happy.

"The only thing that will bother me is my make-ups," he said. "But I think I can fix that up with some costumer until I get my pay and can send for my trunk," and this was what he did before the time for opening up arrived.

Paul was very much worried over the thought of how both might live until they received their first pay, but this question was also settled by Calliwax.

"You must have some clothing in that valise that you don't need. Why not pawn them?"

"I'll have to," answered Paul, and his newly

made friend showed him where a pawnshop was and how to make the best "dicker" for what could be spared.

At six o'clock Paul found himself on the way to the variety theater. Horatio Calliwax had left him, to prepare himself for his own opening, which he felt must make a hit if he wished to retain his position even for the two weeks.

As Paul walked through the crowded streets his thoughts were so busy he did not notice the man who was following him. The individual was the half-drunken cornetist. His face was darker than ever, and concealed under the edge of his coat he carried a wicked-looking sandbag.

"I'll teach the cub to take my job away from me!" he muttered, as he slunk along. "I'll fix him, or else my name aint Sandy Bowen! He'll never perform in that theater to-night!"

CHAPTER IX.

A BLOW IN THE DARK.

ALL unconscious that he was being followed by the enraged cornetist, Paul continued on his way until the corner opposite to the theater was reached. Here was situated an old building, used as a wholesale grocery, and in front were piled a number of soap boxes and barrels of flour, covered with tarpaulins.

As the youth paused in the shadow of the boxes Sandy Bowen slunk up closer. Glancing around to make sure he was not observed, he drew forth the sandbag and swung it in the air. Then with a swish it came down, landing partly upon Paul's neck and partly upon his shoulder. There was a faint moan, and the youth fell over like one dead.

"Ha! I thought that would fetch him," muttered the rascal who had struck the fearful blow. He looked around again. Still no one was near. He lifted up one end of the tarpaulin, shoved the limp body up on several boxes, and let the coarse covering fall upon it. "He'll be safe there till the truckers come around in the morning," he went on, and glided off, secreting his sand-bag as he went.

Half-past six came and went, and Carson looked in vain for his new assistant. Then Horatio Calliwax came in and was appealed to.

"I thought Paul would get here before me," said the actor. "He said he was due at six-thirty, and it's fully seven now."

"Another one not to be depended upon," grumbled Carson. "The Old Nick take the luck! Hicks, can't somebody from the orchestra help me out for one night?"

The matter was hastily discussed, and a cornet player was summoned. He was an elderly man, and not very bright, but Carson drilled him in as well as he was able. At eight o'clock the curtain went up as usual and the audience was none the wiser.

Much to his credit, Calliwax made a decided hit. He impersonated several well-known national characters, men and women, and then, after a brief pause, came out as the then Mayor of Boston. For this impersonation he had prepared a monologue full of local hits, and this brought down the house.

"That's all right," said Hicks briefly. This was as much as he praised any actor. But it was enough for Horatio Calliwax, and, feeling assured that his position was safe for sometime to come, his spirits rose accordingly.

Nevertheless, he was much disturbed over

Paul's non-appearance. In the short time he had known the lad he had taken a great fancy to him. Added to this was the fact that Paul had on his person the four dollars and fifty cents received from the pawnbroker on the contents of the valise. If Paul was not found, Horatio Calliwax would for the time being be left penniless.

"It's funny he didn't turn up," mused the actor. "I wonder if anything could have happened to him? I hope not."

The performance over, Horatio Calliwax stood around a bit to gossip with the other performers. He had a faint hope, it must be confessed, that someone would invite him out to a midnight supper, or at least to a social glass, but the invitation was not forthcoming, and he left the building alone.

He had no place in particular to go to, and half unconsciously crossed the street and came to a halt on the very corner where Paul had been so cruelly assaulted.

If I only knew where to look for him," he murmured, as he leaned up against a barrel. "But looking for anybody in a city the size of Boston is like looking for a needle in a haystack. I wonder if it's possible that guardian of his discovered him and took him back to Stoneville?"

At that instant Horatio Calliwax felt the tarpaulin beside him move. The movement of the

coarse cloth was followed by a low moan of pain.

“Hi! Hullo! what’s this?” ejaculated the actor, and started back. “Somebody is under there, sure, and in pain.” He caught the cover and lifted it up. “Paul, by all that’s marvelous! This is simply extraordinary! Paul, my boy, what’s the matter with you?”

Another groan was the only reply, and now Calliwax noticed that the youth’s collar was stained with blood. Much alarmed, he raised the boy up, and at the same time Paul opened his eyes.

“Who—who struck me?” he asked feebly, and closed his eyes again.

“That’s what I would like to know. Gracious! but you must have been shamefully abused. Was it a footpad, do you think?”

“I—I don’t know. I was hurrying to the theater when I got a blow there,” Paul raised his hand feebly to his neck, “and then—then I guess I lost my senses. It’s most time to get ready for the performance, isn’t it?”

“The performance is over.”

“Oh!” Paul gave a gasp. “Have I lain here as long as that? What will they think of me?”

“Can you stand up?” questioned Horatio Calliwax tenderly.

Paul tried to do as requested, but was too

weak. Seeing this, the actor caught the boy up in his strong arms and carried him over to the playhouse.

A few of the actors and the janitor still lingered about, and to these was related what had occurred. Actors are proverbially kind-hearted, and one at hand agreed to do all he could for Paul. The janitor lived not a great distance away, and it was to his house that the boy was taken. A doctor was sent for and he was made as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

To those who came to see him, Paul told of how Sandy Bowen had shaken his fist through the open window and it was agreed that the cornetist must be guilty. A search was made for him, but he could not be found. The fact of the matter was that after Bowen had sobered up he had become alarmed over his act and taken a train for New York. There he thought he was safe, but he and Paul were destined to meet again.

It was not until three days later that Paul felt strong enough to go on the stage. Even then he was rather light-headed. But he was anxious to earn something, and so did not heed the advice given him by Calliwax and the actor that had befriended him, who had now gone away.

The first portion of his work with Carson passed off fairly well. But as he warmed up the youth began to feel dizzy, and when it came to

playing a rapid duet, with some triple-tonguing in it, he swayed from side to side. He was just on the wind-up, with a flourish, and the audience had begun to applaud, when all became black before his eyes and he staggered back against a table, knocking it over and scattering Carson's traps to the four corners of the stage. A quick ring from the stage manager brought down the drop curtain in the nick of time.

"You can't go on the stage with me again," said Carson, when it was all over and Paul had recovered. "I must have an assistant I can depend upon. I'm sorry for you, but your condition is not my fault. Here are a couple of dollars for to-night's work."

Paul's face grew hot as fire. "I—I did my best," he said. "I suppose I shouldn't have gone on for a few days yet. Can't you give me a chance later on?"

"No. I've got the opportunity to get a boy who used to perform with me, and I'm going to take it. Here are the two dollars."

Paul shoved the money back. "You can keep it—and thank you, for nothing," he said coldly, and two minutes later he had quitted the theater.

Perhaps he was wrong in speaking thus, but it must be remembered that he was sick, faint at heart, and that he had tried his level best to do the work assigned him.

He was standing on the street corner when Horatio Calliwax joined him.

"I don't blame you, Paul—not a bit—for Carson didn't treat you fairly," began the actor. "But now you're out of it, and most all of them are down on you. And I've got my walking papers, too," he added bitterly.

"You! For what? You made a splendid hit," burst out Paul.

"So I did—straight from the shoulder."

"I don't understand."

"That fellow, Curley, the juggler, said something about your being no good, and playing off, and on the impulse of the moment I knocked him down. Some of his friends leaped on me, and we had a rough-and-tumble for five minutes. Hicks came in right in the middle of it, and I was liquidated with and discharged."

"Oh, Calliwax, on my account!" Paul caught his friend by the arm. "It's too bad! I didn't want to drag you into my troubles."

"Your troubles are mine, Paul. Haven't we sworn friendship—everlasting friendship?"

"We have—but——"

"Exactly. So we stand or fall together. Never mind; as one star sets, another rises, so do not despair. In the meantime, however, where are we to repose this night?"

"I don't know."

“How much capital has this company still left to it?”

“A dollar and fifteen cents.”

“Not a large amount, truly, yet enough to give us shelter and food for a day or more. Let us seek the cheapest hotel we can find.”

A quarter of an hour later a hotel was found at which they could get beds for the night for twenty-five cents each. The place was by no means of the best, but it looked clean and fairly comfortable, and they were in no position to demand anything better.

“Pay in advance, please,” said the clerk at the desk, and Horatio Calliwax turned to Paul. The lad placed his hand in his pocket and grew pale. The dollar bill he had possessed was gone!

CHAPTER X.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

"It's gone!"

"Gone! What?"

"The dollar bill I had!"

"Impossible!" ejaculated Horatio Calliwax, and now he was for once thoroughly disconcerted.

"Yes, it's gone," groaned Paul, and he felt in one pocket after another. He did not know that it had slipped from his pocket when he had fallen on the stage. "I've got the fifteen cents, and that's all."

"This is truly unfortunate," sighed the actor. He turned to the hotel clerk. "My friend had a dollar bill, but in some mysterious manner it has disappeared. Cannot you trust us until the morning, when I will have some money coming to me from the variety theater four blocks below here?"

To this request the hotel clerk offered a stony stare. Then he raised his hand and jerked his thumb toward the door.

"It don't work here; my boy. Git!"

"But, sir——"

"Git, both of you, or I'll call the bouncer."

"Come, Paul, he won't trust us. In the future we will patronise only such hotels as have clerks that can recognize gentlemen when they see them," and out hurried Horatio Calliwax, just in time to escape a directory which the clerk flung at his head. Paul lost no time in following his strange friend.

"If only I had what is coming to me from Hicks," sighed Calliwax. "But he doesn't pay until ten A. M. to-morrow, and in the meantime—ha, an idea strikes me; why not?"

"Why not what?"

"We will go to another hotel and put up our pawn tickets for security. Come, I am sure I can work it."

Again they tramped on. It was now past midnight, and Paul was so faint again he could hardly stand. Soon another cheap hotel was reached, and Horatio Calliwax proceeded to make his "arrangements," as he termed it. The clerk was a kind-hearted fellow, and seeing Paul's condition, accepted the pawn tickets without hesitation.

"Maybe I'm stuck, but I'll risk it," he said, and a quarter of an hour later Calliwax and Paul were in bed and sound asleep.

Paul was up and dressed at six o'clock. Horatio Calliwax still snored the snore of the just. The boy dug him in the ribs.

“Calliwax!”

“Wha—what’s up?”

“I am, and you ought to be.”

“What time is it?”

“Going on seven o’clock.”

“That’s not late.”

“And it’s not too early for two fellows who have their fortunes to make,” answered Paul.

By the hour named both were below. A breakfast on fifteen cents was out of the question, and they contented themselves with some fresh rolls and cakes purchased at a bakery on a side street. Horatio Calliwax would have preferred to get drinks at a nearby saloon and patronize the free-lunch counter, but Paul would not listen to it.

The meager breakfast disposed of, they started out to look for new situations. Half of the morning was consumed in tramping from one place to another without success, and then Horatio Calliwax headed for the variety theater, from which he had been so summarily dismissed.

When he returned to Paul his face was longer than ever.

“Didn’t get a dollar!” he burst out. “Hicks says he had to call in a doctor for one of the chaps I knocked down, and if I want any money for my work, I can sue for it. Paul, we are hitting the most extraordinary hard luck to be found in the universe.”

"Words don't do justice to it," answered the youth seriously. "One thing is certain, we must do something, or starve."

"I'll run my face at some hotel before I'll starve," answered Horatio Calliwax.

Paul did not doubt but that the actor meant what he said. But as for the boy, to "sponge" upon others was something he would never consider.

The noon hour came and went, and still nothing in the shape of an opening occurred. Four o'clock found them standing on the corner of Washington and Franklin streets, thoroughly discouraged.

"I'd give all I'm worth to be back in New York," sighed Horatio Calliwax. "There, at least, I have some friends to whom I can turn."

"I don't know where I would like to be," answered Paul. "Probably I'd be as well off at the bottom of the sea," he added bitterly, for the tramping around had made him hungrier than ever, and he was growing just a bit desperate.

"Why, Paul Graham, where did you come from?"

The hearty voice sounded close to Paul's shoulder, and the next moment the lad found himself confronted by Anderson Powell, his former music teacher. The face of the teacher was full of wonder.

"Mr. Powell!" gasped the youth, more than half joyfully. He instinctively felt that this man would help him. Then followed a brisk handshaking, and Horatio Calliwax was introduced.

"On account of my brother's serious sickness I came down to Boston in a hurry the other day," explained Anderson Powell. "I was so upset that I didn't notify any of my pupils that lessons would have to come to an end for the present. But what brought you, Paul? Are you visiting some old friends?"

"I haven't any old friends in Boston any more, Mr. Powell. The two families we used to be intimate with have both moved away. No, I came to strike out for myself. To tell the truth, I cut sticks and run away."

"Really! What for?"

"Because Mr. Dunkirk treated me so meanly. He didn't want me to learn to play, and he wanted me to give up schooling and go to work for that miserly Joel Burgess, and at last he accused me of stealing a lot of money," blurted out Paul; and then, seeing there was no help for it, he told his story from beginning to end, aided in the latter portion by many interruptions from Horatio Calliwax.

Anderson Powell listened with close attention. He took a deep interest in Paul, not only because the lad had proved such an apt pupil on the cornet,

but because he was so frank and free in all he said and did. Moreover, he knew just what Hiram Dunkirk was, and what the man had been, which was more.

“And so you and your friend are without funds?” he said, when both had finished. “Well, that’s hard lines and no mistake. But it is easily remedied.” He took out his pocketbook. “Here are ten dollars, Paul; that ought to be sufficient for immediate expenses.”

“Oh, Mr. Powell, will you lend me that!” cried the youth joyfully.

“I’ll give it to you, Paul, if you’ll accept. It ought to see you both through for a few days, and after that perhaps I can offer both of you an opening.”

“An opening?” queried the lad, and Horatio Calliwax became more interested than ever.

“Yes, although I’m not sure yet. You see, it’s this way. My brother was the leader of the Golden Cornet Band, which has given concert tours throughout the States for three seasons in connection, of course, with other attractions. During the season just opening the band was to travel with Thompson’s Star Entertainers, opening next Monday night at Bridgeport. Now my brother is flat on his back, and instead of trusting a stranger to take his place he wants me to travel with the band, not only to lead, but also to look

after his one-half interest in the entire organization."

"I see," interrupted Paul excitedly. "And if you go, will you take me as a member of the band? It is just what I've been looking for."

"Such an idea has just crossed my mind. Whether or not it can be arranged, remains to be seen. I must say, if I go on the tour, I would like very well to have you with me. As to your friend, perhaps he can arrange for an opening with Thompson, who, I believe, has been disappointed by several parties who intended to travel with him."

"I will see Thompson at once!" burst in Calliwax. "Where can I find him?"

"At the Revere House, or at Danzell's agency. But you had better wait until I can go with you," concluded Anderson Powell, and, seeing the wisdom of this, Calliwax agreed.

To go into all the details of what followed is not necessary. Paul and Calliwax returned with Powell to the hotel at which the music professor and his sick brother were stopping, and here a long conversation ensued, interrupted by visits from members of the Golden Cornet Band, and by a call from Thompson, the manager.

The upshot of the whole matter was that Anderson Powell became the leader of the band and also manager for his brother, and that Paul was

assigned to a place in the band as second B-flat cornet player, at a salary of twelve dollars per week and all traveling expenses. As for Horatio Calliwax, a notice in a morning paper regarding his hit at the variety theater the night previous pleased Thompson so much that he agreed to give the impersonator a trial during the opening week, with a fair salary for the balance of the tour, if satisfactory.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OPENING AT BRIDGEPORT.

“WELL, to-night will tell the tale.”

It was Paul who spoke. The Golden Cornet Band and Thompson's Star Entertainers had arrived in Bridgeport on an early morning train and put up at a hotel overlooking the broad waters of the Sound. The combination numbered twenty musicians and twelve performers, and a rehearsal had been called at ten o'clock sharp.

During the past few days Paul had applied himself as never before. Anderson Powell had loaned him a beautiful gold-plated cornet, and also supplied him with a book containing all of the pieces the band intended to play while on the tour, and hour after hour had been spent, alone and with the other players, in getting each air “down fine.”

Some of the older members of the band were inclined to sniff at the lad at first, but this feeling against Paul wore away when they saw what a natural musician he was and how earnestly he took hold.

“He vos all right, alretty,” said Bungleman,

the bass player, who manipulated a shiny horn, which wound itself several times around his fat body. "Vait till he vos a mans, und sum odder cornet blayers vot I know von't be in it mid him, aint it!"

Bunglemann was a character. He was a short fellow, weighing nearly two hundred pounds, and a great talker. Years before he had belonged to a celebrated band in Berlin, Germany, and he never tired of telling stories of "der Faderland." He and Paul were soon on the best of terms.

Through a loan made by Anderson Powell, Horatio Calliwax had secured the trunk attached at Billerica, and also some of his other effects, and Paul had got back his valise, with the clothing, pawned in Boston. Calliwax rehearsed as hard as the boy, determined to make even a greater hit, if possible, than that secured at the Hub.

"Give me a small city for an appreciative audience," he said to Paul. "I would rather play to such people as we shall meet here than any crowd you can gather in Boston, New York, or Philadelphia. Why, in some of the big places the audience seems to be afraid to let itself loose, and how can a fellow do his best when they refuse to warm up?" And this remark, often made by professional players, Paul found out later was largely true.

The show had been advertised for a week

ahead, and when the doors opened there were several hundred people waiting to gain admission, the majority of the crowd going upstairs into the gallery. Later on came those who had purchased reserved seats. By eight o'clock the house was three-quarters full, and people were still drifting in.

“Not a packed house, but a fairly good one,” said Anderson Powell. “Of course, a good part of those present came in on paper,” meaning that the people mentioned had not paid their way, but had come in on complimentary tickets given for hanging up advertising matter.

The first number on the programme was a piece by the Golden Cornet Band. Two rows of chairs had been arranged in semicircles on the stage, and Paul found himself, with the other cornet players, in the middle of the first row, with an E-flat cornet player on one side of him, and a clarionet player on the other. In front of all was a small raised platform, with a music stand, for the leader.

The band wore a taking uniform, consisting of white trousers and vest and deep blue coat, trimmed in red. This uniform, along with the golden instruments, made a decidedly brilliant appearance, and when the curtain went up there was a round of applause.

A second later Professor Powell made his ap-

pearance with a bow. Baton in hand, he ascended the platform and looked at the players. All were in readiness, and down came the stick, and with a grand musical crash the overture to the evening's entertainment was begun.

It was a lively, catchy air, full of brilliant passages for each instrument in turn, and went more than well. When the end came there was a loud clapping of hands and a stamping of feet, and the number had to be repeated.

"We're all right on that," said Harry Stone, the coronet player who sat beside Paul. "Now, let us see how we make out with Miss Donati."

Miss Donati was Thompson's leading lady singer, and she came next on the programme, so that she might have the band to accompany her. She sang first an operatic selection, which went fairly well, and then a popular ballad, and this took the house by storm, and had to be repeated twice.

When next the curtain went up the audience found the stage cleared of all but a small center table piled high with various wigs and mustaches, a small mirror and half a dozen other odds and ends. Before the table stood Horatio Calliwax, attired in a regulation full-dress suit.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, bowing and smiling to the right and the left, "with your kind permission I will give you a few impersonations

of characters whom I trust all will recognize. My first impersonation will be that of our late President."

He darted toward the table and busied himself for ten seconds among the articles lying there. Then his face and breast swelled out to their full extent, and he strode forward with a loud ahem, and bowed and smiled again.

"Hullo, Grover Cleveland!" came from the gallery, and a laugh went up, showing the audience was well pleased.

Next came impersonations of other Presidents, and of a Governor or two, and then Horatio Calli-wax started in on the comics.

"Begorra, Oi just kem over from Limerick," he blubbered, as he came out in a droll Irish character. "On the dock I met a mon that axed me to collect a bill of twinty dollars fer him. Oi let him kape me bundle as security, an' Oi haven't been able to run acrost the mon since. If Oi do he'll wisht he was dead before we mate, belave me!" and another laugh went up.

"Haf anypoddy seen dot dorg of mine?" he wen on, coming out in the character of a German Hebrew. "He's a skvare-legged leetle fellow, mid his ears cut short und his tail cut long. Der last I seen of him he runt into der corner putcher shop. I vos dink to puy me some sausages py dot putcher shop, but now I vas suspicious," and the

laugh that followed showed that this humor went as well as the others. He gave several other impersonations, and wound up as a plantation darkey, attempting several tricks he had seen performed by a juggler. The tricks, of course, would not work at first, which made the audience howl over the darkey's dismay, but in the end Calliwax showed what he really could do, and when the curtain went down the impersonator had to come out and bow his thanks for the audience's appreciation.

"You've made the hit of the evening!" cried Paul, as he came up to his friend. "I was watching you, from the wings, and I nearly laughed myself sick.

Thompson also was well satisfied. That night he offered Calliwax a regular engagement for the tour at thirty dollars per week, and Calliwax accepted.

The other numbers on the programme were also well received. Especially was this true of the final number of the band, a potpourri of operatic selections. In this Paul and Harry Stone had a duet for two cornets, and nothing could have been better than the youth's smooth and tasteful playing. The duet was encored twice, and the two players were forced to get up and bow, so generous was the applause. All around, the evening's entertainment had proved an unqualified success.

The organization was booked to remain in Bridgeport three nights, and on the second and third nights the theater was jammed, for the local critics had given all a splendid puff in the papers. The success pleased Anderson Powell as much as anyone, and he lost no time in writing to his brother, stating all particulars.

Since Paul had joined the band he had been longing to ask the professor about many affairs of the past. But he saw how busy Anderson Powell was trying to fill his brother's place, and so he waited for a more seasonable opportunity. This came when the organization left Bridgeport for a three days' appearance at Hartford, previous to a two weeks' run in New York. Paul managed to get into the same seat in the car with Powell and broached the subject while the train was speeding in the direction of New Haven.

"Well, Paul, I'm afraid I can't tell you as much as you would like to know," said the professor, stroking his chin reflectively. "At the time of your father's death I know he did hold stock in the quarry company to the amount of ten thousand dollars or more. Of course, the stock went down when the company got into financial difficulties, but Hiram Dunkirk must have got something out of the final settlement."

"Well, who knows anything about this settlement?" questioned the youth.

"There was a man named Barret Radley who knew all about the quarry affairs. But Radley, I've been told, went to Cape Town, Africa."

"Was there anybody else?"

"Joel Burgess knew a good deal."

"That won't help me any. He is hand-in-glove with Hiram Dunkirk."

"True. I'll tell you what you might do. Write a letter to Barret Radley and send it to Cape Town. It's a good deal of a venture, but it's better than nothing."

"I'll do it just as soon as we get to Hartford," answered Paul.

On and on rushed the long train through a heavy mist which had swept in from Long Island Sound. New Haven was soon passed, and the next stopping place would be Meriden. The mists grew thicker, shutting out the ever-varying landscape.

"I don't like traveling in this sort of weather," observed Anderson Powell, with a shake of his head. "The engineer and fireman can't see the signals very well, and there's no telling what is ahead."

"We'll be in Hartford in a little over half an hour," returned Paul. And then, unable to see anything but mist and rain, he settled back in the cushioned seat and gave himself up to his reflections.

On the whole, his thoughts were rather pleasant. He was now clear of Hiram Dunkirk's clutches, and even if his father's estate did not bring him in any great amount of money, he had a good position, and he intended to strive in his profession until the topmost rung was gained and he had become either a leading player or a band-master. He would not let Hiram Dunkirk off easily, he promised himself that, when the time of reckoning came.

Suddenly a shiver and a bump threw him from his seat and smashed the window glass beside him. Then came a tremendous shock, followed by another, and the front end of the car shot into the air. There was a grinding and a tearing, mingled with a score of shrieks and groans from wounded and dying. Another shock followed, as the car behind also went up, and then, as Paul in his terror glanced upward, he saw the roof above settling slowly down upon himself and those around him.

CHAPTER XII.

FROM OUT OF THE WRECK.

It was an appalling situation—doubly so because it had come so unexpectedly.

The train had met with some terrible accident—just what, was now impossible to tell; and the car behind had leaped up on that in which Paul and the other members of the band sat, and threatened to crush everyone into a jelly.

The crash had produced a cloud of dust, smoke, and splintered wood, and in the awful confusion which reigned for a moment it was as if pandemonium had broken loose.

“Help! help! I’m being crushed to death!”

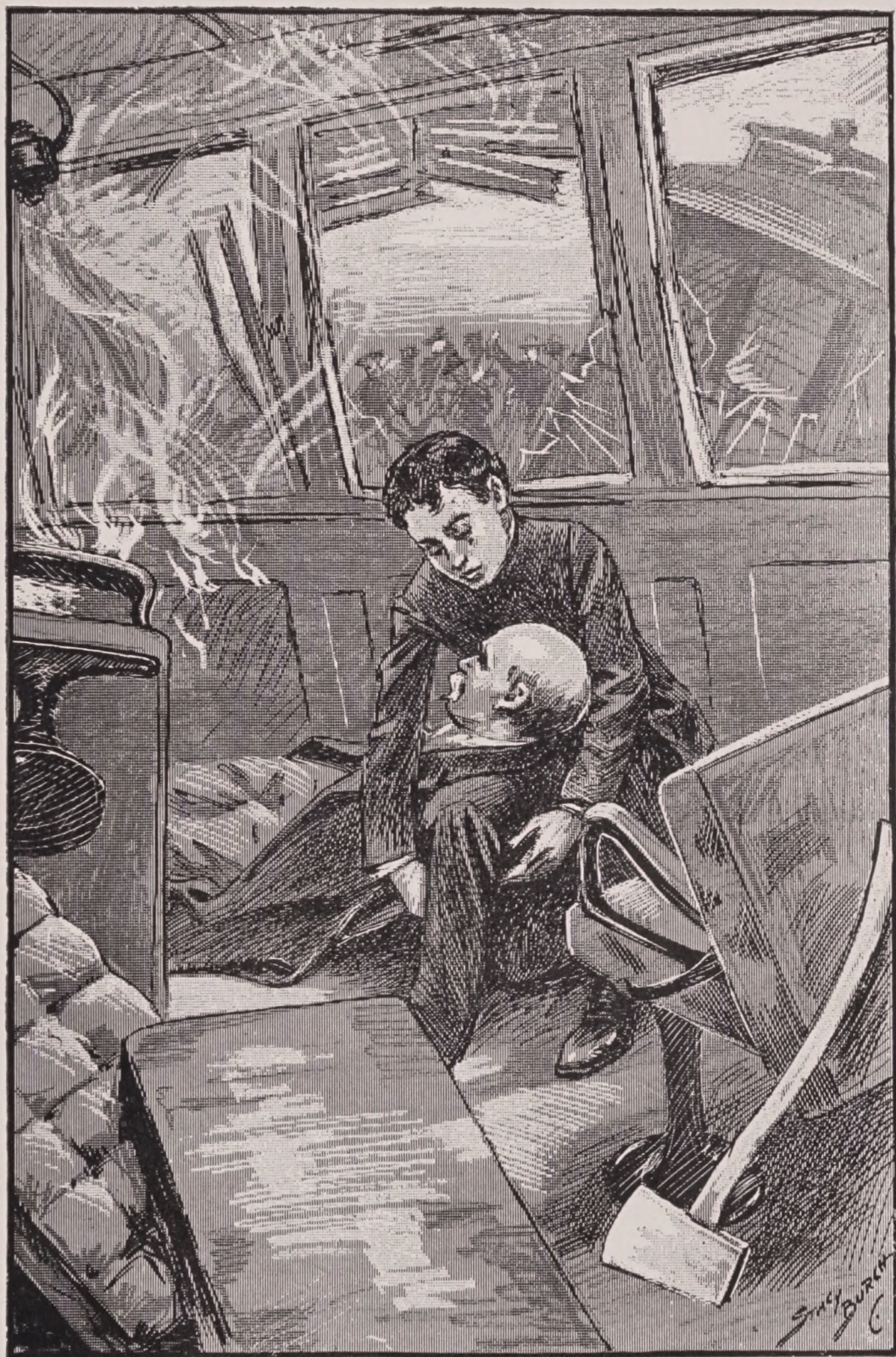
“Take that seat from my chest!”

“Save my wife! Where is my wife?”

“Where is my little boy? Willie, Willie, where are you?”

“Look out for the roof! It’s coming down!”

The last cry was the loudest of all, taken up as it was by half a dozen throats at once. Slowly but surely the roof was settling. It had split in the middle and through the crack showed a portion of a truck belonging to the other car.



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“Professor Powell!” cried Paul, as soon as he could catch his breath. “Get up! We must get out, or we’ll be killed!”

For Anderson Powell had been hurled into the aisle and lay prostrate, and several were already trampling on his body. Shoving two men back, Paul succeeded in raising the bandmaster in his arms. He was totally unconscious, and the blood was flowing from a wound on the forehead.

“This way with him, Paul!” It was Horatio Calliwax who spoke. He had been sitting behind the pair, reading a newspaper. He jerked his hand toward the smashed window and broke out what remained of the glass. “It’s the best way out.”

The boy saw that Calliwax was right; it was not only the best, but also the only way to escape. The rear of the car was a wreck, while the front was jammed with passengers fighting to get out.

“You go first and I’ll lift him out to you,” said Paul, and like a flash Horatio Calliwax disappeared through the opening. The next instant he had Anderson Powell by the shoulders and was dragging him forth.

It was a heartbreaking moment to Paul, for now the roof had sagged halfway down to the car seats. He gave the bandmaster’s legs a shove, and leaped through the window himself. A second more and he was rolling down an embank-

ment with half a dozen other people. Presently there came a crash, and the roof that had sagged gave way completely, and a fire started up from no one knew where.

In five minutes the true situation became known, and willing hands went to work to care for the dead and those who had been injured.

A freight train had been backing out from a side track, and the engineer of the passenger train had failed to see the signal to stop. The locomotive had run into a freight-car loaded with lumber and scattered it in all directions.

At the last moment both the fireman and the engineer had jumped for their lives, and rolling into a watery ditch had escaped serious injury. But several were dead in the third car, that occupied by the band, and many were injured in the car behind, which stood with the front end well up in the air and with the passengers spilling out of the rear door like beans out of a cornucopia.

"I wonder if our crowd are all safe?" said Horatio Calliwax, as soon as he and Paul came together in the meadow lot beside the track.

Paul did not reply at once, but knelt at Anderson Powell's side. The bandmaster's breast began to heave and presently he opened his eyes.

"Oh, Heavens!" he moaned. "What has happened?"

"We've had a smash-up," answered Paul.

"You were knocked out. How do you feel? Not seriously hurt, I trust."

"I—I guess not." The bandmaster drew a long breath and sat up. "Never mind me—now. Go and see if the others are safe," and he gazed at the scene before him in horror. "I felt it in my bones," he went on. "Don't you remember what I said about traveling in the fog?"

Calliwax and Paul ran up the embankment again, followed by several others. The fire that had started was now growing, and from the interior of the car came half a score of yells for help.

"We ought to do something for the poor wretches inside," said Paul, his heart touched with pity. "Come on!"

"You'll be burnt up!" ejaculated Calliwax, trying to restrain him. But Paul broke away, and mounted to the front end of the smashed car, which had now become clear of frightened passengers.

Once inside of the car, he could at first see but little, for the dust and smoke were as thick as ever. But now the fire spurted up and by its glare he beheld a man lying on his back and pinned down by two seats which were crushing in his chest.

"For the love of Heaven, help me!" groaned the sufferer, at sight of Paul.

"I will!" answered the boy. Rushing for-

ward, he summoned all of his strength and wrenched the topmost seat away. Then he tackled the other seat, but it was jammed in between another seat and the side of the car, and could not be budged.

“Be careful, you are hurting me!” came in a groan. “Get a pry, or something! You can’t do anything with your bare hands!”

Paul ran back to the doorway. He remembered having seen some tools screwed fast to the wall, in a glass case. He smashed the glass with his elbow and brought forth a short crowbar and an ax.

By this time others had followed his lead into the car, and several more sufferers were rescued. But the fire was growing hot, and whatever was to be done for the man under the car seat must be accomplished quickly. Crash! crash! went the ax, and the splintered wood flew in all directions. Then the crowbar was applied, the seat came up, and the man was free.

He was too weak to stand, and Paul dragged him forth and slung him over his shoulder. The fire was on every side, and live embers fell upon the lad’s neck, burning him in half a dozen places and singeing his hair. But he was pure grit, and staggered to the platform with his burden and leaped into the meadow.

Two people had been killed—a man and a

woman—and nine had been injured. Fortunately not one of the band or the theatrical performers had been seriously hurt, although all had been scratched, and many were in a state of nervous collapse, especially the ladies.

The man Paul had rescued was a well-built and well-dressed individual of forty, who gave his name as Horace Browler and said he was a New York lawyer.

“I shall not forget your bravery and kindness,” he said to the youth after the excitement was over and the wounded had been cared for. “If you had not come to my assistance I would have been burnt up in yonder flames.” And he shuddered.

“I only did my duty, same as lots of others here,” answered Paul modestly. “It was a pretty bad smash-up.”

Horace Browler was anxious to know more of the boy who had saved him, and when Paul went off to aid Anderson Powell he asked Calli-wax a number of questions and took down in his note-book Paul’s name and traveling tour so far as made out.

“He shall certainly hear from me again, and you can tell him so,” he said to the impersonator, and then limped off to see what prospect there was of getting to Hartford, where he was due to argue a case at two in the afternoon.

It was not until an hour later that a train was

backed down from the capital to take on board those who had remained at the scene of the wreck. One of the cars was transformed into a hospital, and here the wounded were made as comfortable as possible.

During the excitement Paul had forgotten all about the gold-plated cornet he had been carrying, done up in a neat leather case. Now, as the train started off, he sprang up in dismay.

"By jinks!" he ejaculated, "my cornet!"

"Bixby gathered in all the instruments," said Anderson Powell. "I spoke to him as soon as I could think of it."

Bixby was the general utility man attached to the organization. He was in the front end of the car, and Paul lost no time in interviewing him.

"Have you my cornet, Bixby?" he questioned. "The case has 'A. P.' stamped on it; Anderson Powell lent it to me."

"Here are all the instruments," replied Bixby, pointing to the pile beside him. "Do you see yours anywhere?" and he began to toss them over.

Paul did not, and his heart sank when the search was concluded.

"You are sure you have all that were picked up here?" he asked.

"I let Harry Stone have one horn. Perhaps that is yours. Stone is in the car ahead."

"I'll soon find out," concluded Paul, and moved away to the car in question. Stone sat smoking a cigar, to quiet his nerves as he said:

"No, this is my cornet," he said, exhibiting the instrument. "I haven't seen your instrument anywhere."

Thoroughly alarmed, Paul now began a systematic search. But it was useless; the cornet and case were gone.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHASE AFTER A THIEF.

PAUL regretted the loss of the musical instrument for two reasons. The first was that the loss must be made good to Anderson Powell, and the second was that, without his cornet, playing in the band would be out of the question.

But the bandmaster soon came to his relief.

"Never mind, Paul; we are not supposed to think of everything in such a wreck as that," he said. "It was a good deal better to help me through the window than it was to save the horn. As for the value of the instrument and case, the railroad company is responsible for that."

"But I can't play without a cornet."

"True enough. But I fancy there are several instrument establishments in Hartford where another cornet can be procured, although it may not be gold-plated."

"That cornet just suited me," sighed Paul. "If only I had the mouthpiece!" Horn-players become very much attached to certain mouthpieces which just fit their lips.

"No use of crying over spilt milk," concluded Anderson Powell, and there the subject dropped.

When the train reached Hartford there was a great crowd at the depot, for the news of the accident had spread. The wounded were hurried off to various hospitals and the dead to the morgue, and several officers of the railroad company rushed around to learn from each passenger his name and address, and if he had suffered any loss. To one of these officials was mentioned the missing cornet and several other things, and the man said that everything would be attended to and settled for at the earliest possible date.

It was a rather nervous and unsettled company which gathered in the theater that afternoon for rehearsal. Miss Donati was entirely off the bill, and her place had to be filled by another singer. From a local musician Paul succeeded in hiring a B-flat cornet for the three days the organization would remain in Hartford.

The public like excitement and something new, and the fact that the members of the company had been in the smash-up brought a large audience to the theater, many coming out of curiosity. Quick to catch on to a new thing, one of the lady singers appeared on the stage with a good-sized bit of court-plaster on her forehead, where she had received a slight scratch. Her singing was only fair, but the plaster did the business. She was

hailed as a semi-martyr, and the applause she received was terrific. Such is the pulse of the public.

The band, too, presented the appearance of veterans from the war and were treated accordingly, every air going with a rush and a hurrah which was as inspiring as it was gratifying.

"Things are all coming our way, in spite of smash-ups," observed Horatio Calliwax, as he and Paul were wending their way to the hotel at which the band was stopping. "But then it's not strange, for true talent is bound to be recognized sooner or later," he added, with an old-time toss of his head.

"Don't grow conceited, Calliwax," laughed the boy. "Our luck may turn before we know it. I am anxious to know how we are going to make out in New York and Philadelphia. A New York audience is the most critical in the world, so I've been told."

"We'll carry 'em by storm, astonish, and astound them," finished Horatio, who was in a "fly-away" mood. From a mental point of view prosperity was apt to be his worst enemy, for then his air-castles and his self-praise became almost too great for endurance.

On the following morning Paul addressed a letter to Barrett Radley, General Delivery, Cape

Town, Africa, in which he mentioned who he was and that his father was dead, and asked for full information about the Stoneville Quarry Company and its stock and stockholders. He also mentioned Hiram Dunkirk and Joel Burgess, and requested Radley to give him what information he could concerning those individuals.

“I am trying to get what is coming to me out of Hiram Dunkirk,” he concluded, “and if you can help me in any way you can rest assured that I will pay you well for your trouble.”

The letter duly sealed and addressed, the youth went below to buy a stamp and post it. He placed the epistle in his outer pocket, never for a moment dreaming of what was really to become of it and what an important part it was to play in the immediate future.

Paul had noted that the post office was not far away from the hotel, and, in the fashion of many people older than himself, thought it would be as well to drop the letter right at the office instead of in a letter box.

On his way he had to pass a musical instrument establishment, and curiosity prompted him to gaze at the instruments in the window. There was a fine-looking cornet there, and he passed inside to learn the price.

A stout German was behind the counter, waiting on rather a tough-looking individual who had

brought in an instrument wrapped in a sheet of newspaper.

“Do yer ever buy cornets at second-hand?” asked the caller, and at the words Paul pricked up his ears. He came closer, and a single glance sufficed to show that the instrument offered was the one Anderson Powell had loaned him!

“Why, that’s my horn!” he cried, and put out his hand to seize the instrument. But the tough drew back quickly in amazement. Then, noting that Paul wore a cap inscribed “Golden Cornet Band,” he tucked the cornet under his arm and made a dash for the door.

“Stop him! he’s a thief!” yelled Paul, and made after the fellow. Out on the street went both, and the tough started for the neighborhood of the river.

The street was fairly crowded, and it was with difficulty that Paul kept the fellow in sight. But the youth’s blood was up and he was determined to regain Anderson Powell’s instrument at any hazard.

“Stop him! Stop him!” he cried; but strange to say, but few heard his call, and no one did as he desired.

At last the tough reached a large dock surrounded by a high fence. The gate was open and he darted through. Looking back he saw that Paul was still on his track and slammed the gate

shut and fastened it by dropping a heavy bar into place.

"Dat's der time yer got left," piped up a small boy who had witnessed the move and saw Paul's chagrin as he came to a halt on the outside.

"Give me a leg up, quick!" cried Paul.
"That man is a thief."

"A t'ief?"

"Yes. Help me, won't you?"

"O' course, if dat's de case. Up yer go, boss."

The small boy, who was strong for his size, caught Paul by the waist, and then placed one hand under the youth's right foot. Up the boards scrambled the young cornetist, to reach the top a few seconds later and drop on the opposite side.

But climbing the fence had taken time, and now the thief was nowhere in sight. Yet Paul felt he must be close by, and he commenced a thorough search of the dock, which was piled high with merchandise and lumber.

Presently he reached a small tool-house close to the water's edge. There was a window at one side, and as he passed this he saw the head of the thief suddenly bob out of sight behind a number of ship's tools. He ran around to the door and burst it open.

"Hi! wot do yer want here?" demanded the tough, putting on a bold front, now that he was cornered.

"You know well enough what I want," returned Paul. "Where is that cornet?"

"Don't know nuthin' about a cornet."

"You do. Hand it over, or I'll have you locked up in double-quick order."

"Will yer let me off if I do hand it over?" questioned the tough earnestly.

"That remains to be seen. Give me the cornet first."

"I didn't say I had it."

As the rascal spoke he edged close to Paul. Suddenly he aimed a wicked blow at the boy's head. Had not the youth dodged he must have been knocked senseless. The force of the blow nearly carried the tough off his feet, and ere he could recover Paul hit out in return and landed on the rascal's neck.

"Ouow!" grunted the tough as he staggered up against a corner. Then Paul gave him another, and the tough went down on his back.

"I'll git square wid you! see if I don't!" he hissed. "I'll git square as sure as me name is Mike Hooney."

While the tough was flat on his back Paul's eyes swept the interior of the tool-house, and he caught sight of the cornet case stuffed behind a coil of rope. He drew it forth and opened it. The cornet was inside, and the instrument had the appearance of being in perfect condition.

"You stay where you are," said Paul to the tough, who still lay somewhat "knocked out." "Don't you dare to follow me!" and thus speaking he withdrew from the tool-house and started along the dock to the street.

Mike Hooney muttered something under his breath. The blow Paul had delivered had been an extra heavy one, and for the time being the tough was chary about making a move. By the time he did get up Paul was out of sight.

The youth hardly knew what to do. To have the would-be thief arrested would only cause trouble, and he might be detained in Hartford as a witness against the rascal. He thought the matter over and concluded to let it drop.

"I gave him one to remember me by," he thought. "I reckon he won't bother me again."

But for once Paul was mistaken. Mike Hooney was destined to bother him a good deal, and in a manner least expected.

CHAPTER XIV.

HIRAM DUNKIRK HAS A STRANGE VISITOR.

DURING the scuffle in the tool-house Paul had dropped the letter written to Barrett Radley. Mike Hooney had noticed it, but did not mention the fact. Assured that Paul had gone, the tough picked up the epistle and sneaked away.

"Barrett Radley, General Delivery, Cape Town, Africa," he read, half aloud, for, like a good many others of limited education, Hooney could not read without making his lips move. "Great smoke! where is dat place, I wonder? I've heard of Africky, but I never heard of no Cape Town. I'll see wot's inside," and he tore the letter open.

Sitting in an out-of-the-way corner of a favorite saloon, it took Mike Hooney the best part of an hour to master the contents of Paul's carefully written epistle. As he finished his eyes took on a cunning look, and he ran his hands thoughtfully through his bushy red hair.

"Here's a graft o' some kind," he muttered. "Dat boy is tryin' ter learn somet'in' about some

property dis Hiram Dunkirk is holdin' fer him. He says he's afraid dis Dunkirk is tryin' ter squeeze him, an' he wants information from dis Barrett Radley. It's a deep game all around, ter my way o' thinkin'. I wonder if I can't make sumt'in' out of it?"

Mike Hooney was a great hand for making "sumt'in'" out of everything that came his way. Strictly speaking, he had never done an honest stroke of work in his life. At times he had been a sneak thief, pickpocket, and beggar, and although he had managed thus far to escape the vigilance of the police, he was wanted for a dozen crimes of more or less importance. His career had originally started in Boston, but, that place getting too hot for him, he had drifted first to New York and then to Hartford, and became a member of the gang of toughs who congregate along the river.

Mike Hooney had been thinking of revisiting Boston on the proceeds to be received from the sale of the stolen cornet, but now money from this source having failed him he looked around for some other manner in which to raise funds.

The chance came that very evening. Curious and daring, he visited the theater in which the Golden Cornet Band and Thompson's Entertainers were having such success. He entered the gallery, and was careful to seat himself beside a

rather well-dressed young man who sported a gold watch and chain.

The entertainment was nearly over, and the band was performing one of its best selections, when Mike Hooney began one of his peculiar operations. While the well-dressed young man was thoroughly interested, Mike drew forth a handkerchief with a flourish and blew his nose vigorously. As one hand held the handkerchief the other slid over to the young man's vest, and in two seconds the gold timepiece and chain were in the tough's possession, wrapped in the handkerchief. A moment later Hooney arose and quitted the gallery. Before the show was over and the young man had discovered his loss the gold watch and chain were pawned for sixteen dollars, and Mike was on his way to Boston.

One day was spent among his old companions, and then, dropping a hint that he had a big deal on among "de hayseeds," Mike Hooney brushed himself up, got a barber to cut his hair and shave him, and took a train for Stoneville Junction.

"It won't do no harm ter look into de t'ing," he argued to himself. "I'll make dat Hiram Dunkirk pay me fer de letter, if nuthin' else."

Paul's guardian—if such we must still call the miserly man—was seated at his desk in the sitting room when his wife announced a visitor. Dun-

kirk had got back his four hundred and fifty dollars, and although he felt pretty certain Paul had not taken the money he still told outsiders that the boy must be guilty, and nobody else.

"He is a thorough rascal and will end on the gallows," was what he would add.

"Who is it, Margy?" he asked, looking up from a mass of figures, for he had been calculating how much he would make out of the Stoneville Quarry Company's stock if Paul did not return to claim his inheritance.

"Gives his name as Michael Hooney, Hiram. I never set eyes on him before."

"Must be that fellow as wanted to sell me a new quarry machine," grumbled Hiram Dunkirk. "Show him in, and I'll soon send him about his business."

"How are yer, sir?" exclaimed Mike Hooney as he stepped in briskly and extended his hand. Hiram shook it flabbily.

"Reckon you're that agent fer quarry machines?" he said sourly.

"Quarry machines? Wot's dat?" exclaimed Hooney. Then he checked himself. "No, I aint in dat kind of business. I'm a—a—speculator. I come all de way from Hartford ter see yer on a bit of private business. See?" and Mike Hooney closed one eye suggestively.

Hiram Dunkirk did not see. Nevertheless his

face changed color, something that Hooney was quick to notice.

"Private business?" he faltered.

"Dat's it. I wish ter see yer alone about it."

This was said for the benefit of Mrs. Dunkirk, who stood in the doorway eyeing Hooney curiously. Taking the hint, the lady of the house went off, slamming the door after her.

"What business is it you have with me?" demanded Hiram Dunkirk.

Before answering Mike Hooney drew up a chair and cast himself into it, dropping his hat on the floor at the same time.

"If I aint mistaken, Mr. Dunkirk, you have a boy, Paul Graham, dat you are guardian of," he began.

"Oh, you come about Paul. Did he send you?"

"Not much he didn't. I came on my own account, sir—came to do you a good turn, if you'll let me," and Hooney's voice sank into a confidential whisper. He saw just what manner of a man he had to deal with, and was determined to act accordingly.

"I—I don't understand, Mr. Hooney."

"Dere aint no mister about me. I'm plain Mike Hooney, and if yer want me to help yer, why, say so. See? De udder day I got wind of how dis Paul is goin' ter try ter hurt yer—kick up

a big fuss about dat estate yer a-holdin' fer him. I t'inks it over, an' I says to meself, 'I'll go up an' see dat Hiram Dunkirk, an' see if he wants me to put him onto wot's going on.' So here I am, at yer service, if you want me."

"Paul is going to make trouble? How can he? Everything is straight, and——"

Dunkirk broke off short.

"Dere was a man named Barrett Radley wot knows sumt'in'——"

And now Mike Hooney paused.

"Ha!" Hiram Dunkirk leaped to his feet. "What do you know of Barrett Radley?" he gasped.

"I aint tellin' wot I know unless I'm paid fer it. See? I always talk plain when I make a deal; den dere aint no misunderstandin's."

Hiram Dunkirk winced. Parting with money was to him as bad as having teeth pulled. But he was curious to know what his visitor might have to say.

"If your——ahem!——information is worth anything I'll pay you for your trouble in coming here," he replied.

"Fork over a hundred dollars, an' I'll tell yer all I know, sir."

"A hundred dollars!" howled Hiram Dunkirk. "Man, you must be crazy!"

"Wot I have ter tell may keep yer out of jug,"

said Hooney, starting to draw on his imagination, now that he saw how matters were drifting.

This remark scared Hiram Dunkirk still more, and he ended by bringing out all the cash the desk contained—eighty dollars—and placing it within his visitor's reach.

Feeling he was now safe, and that Dunkirk was just the sort of man he had expected to meet, Mike Hooney brought out the lost letter and passed it over for perusal. It is needless to state with what deep interest Hiram Dunkirk perused the epistle. As he read the cold perspiration stood out on his forehead.

"It aint pleasant readin', is it?" said Hooney, at the same time reaching out and securing the eighty dollars. Hiram Dunkirk was too much agitated to stop him.

"How did you get this letter?" he questioned.

"Dat's tellin'."

"Did you steal it?"

"Maybe I did—fer your benefit."

"Do you know anything about what the boy is doing now?"

"I know everyt'ing about wot he's doin'."

"Perhaps he sent you here?" queried Hiram Dunkirk with sudden suspicion.

"No. I'll tell yer how it was. We had a quarrel, an' in de fight he dropped de letter. I took it an' said nothin'. Say, don't yer want ter git

square wid him for writin' dat? If yer say de word, I'm yer man ter—well, do anyt'ing yer say. See? Anyt'ing, an' dat covers de hull ground."

"Tell me what the boy is doing, and—perhaps we can come to terms."

"He's playin' cornet in de Golden Cornet Band. Dey are performin' in Hartford dis week, but next week dey take to de road. I reckon de boy is got a good position and is makin' friends, so if yer want ter do anyt'ing yer got ter be quick about it."

"I would like to get rid of him for good," muttered Hiram Dunkirk between his teeth. "I don't owe him anything," he added hastily for Hooney's benefit, "but he may cause me a lot of trouble."

"O' course yer don't owe him anyt'ing," said Hooney reassuringly; "but such fellers is best out o' de way sometimes. I've got a plan to git rid o' him which yer might try, but I aint workin' fer nuthin'. See?"

Hiram Dunkirk drew a long breath. The two rascals looked each other in the eyes; then both sat down.

"Tell me of your plan," said Dunkirk, "and if it's a good one I'll pay you well to carry it out."

And then and there a plot was concocted against Paul which was to produce most surprising results,

CHAPTER XV.

THE GRAND OPENING IN NEW YORK.

It was not until he had returned to the hotel and acquainted Anderson Powell with the news that the missing cornet was recovered that Paul became aware that the letter to Barrett Radley was gone.

He spent half an hour on the street in hunting for it and then returned to his room and penned, as near as he was able, a duplicate, which he duly posted on his way to the theater.

The last night spent in Hartford was a big success, and when the organization took the midnight train for New York all of the members were in the best of humor, even though tired out.

"We are doing very well," said Anderson Powell to Paul. "But the first week in New York will tell the tale as to whether we are to sink or swim this season."

"I trust you are satisfied with my playing," answered the boy. "I am doing my best and practicing from three to four hours every day."

"I am thoroughly satisfied, Paul. I only wish

some of the other players would practice as much. Harry Stone is a good-enough fellow, but he won't practice at all."

Paul knew that what Anderson Powell said was true. Stone was one of those players who thought there was no need to waste hour after hour in playing scales and difficult passages, and had told Paul so. In that he made a great mistake, for every public performer must practice continually to keep in perfect musical condition.

For the opening in New York several new selections had been given out, and the band was called together for rehearsal on Sunday as well as Monday afternoon. The opening was to take place at a leading opera house, and Thompson was doing all in his power to advertise it and create a "boom."

"My old hunting ground," said Horatio Calliwx, as he and Paul took a stroll down Broadway. "You can talk about other cities, but to me there is but one New York." Calliwx spent several hours on the Rialto, as the neighborhood of Fourteenth Street is designated by theatrical folks, and introduced Paul to several actors and actresses of more or less note.

Paul had never been in New York before, and he was anxious to pay visits to Central Park, the Brooklyn Bridge, and other points of interest. But it was a case of business before pleasure, and

he stuck to the theater and his cornet and practiced harder than ever.

At the Monday afternoon rehearsal there was a row. Harry Stone had not rehearsed the new pieces, as Anderson Powell had directed, and the bandmaster censured the cornet player for his neglect. Stone grew angry, and the upshot of the matter was that he was discharged on the spot, and Paul was called on to fill the position of leading B-flat cornet, one of the most important in a band of this sort.

"I must look to you to fill Stone's place," said Anderson Powell. "Do your level best, Paul, and mind that triple-tonguing in that 'Day Dream' selection."

"I will, sir. I've been practicing on that for the last half-hour."

"Well, don't practice after five o'clock. Your lips ought to have at least three hours' rest before the concert begins."

"Paul vos a goot poy to blay," put in the German bass player. "He vill be a besser player as Stone efer dared to pe."

Horatio Calliwax was also far from idle. In his impersonations he intended to include the Mayor of New York and several other well-known local characters, and to do this successfully was no mean task. To those who sit as an audience only, little is known of the immense amount of details

actors and others have to go into to produce anything successfully. A single "turn," as it is called, may last but five minutes, yet the actor may have work for six hours a day for months in preparing himself for that selfsame turn.

At last the eventful hour for opening in the great metropolis arrived. It would be useless to deny that all hands, from Powell and Thompson down, were more or less nervous. To open in New York means the investment of thousands of dollars, and if a performance is a "freeze out," it means an immense sum of money lost, and no reputation with which to go on the road. On the other hand, a successful metropolitan opening means money in pocket and offers from everywhere in the United States at good percentage figures.

At seven o'clock the doors were opened, and in half an hour less than a hundred people had drifted in and these mostly in the gallery. The reserved seat sheet denoted less than another hundred still to come. Thompson shook his head.

"We have two farce comedies and a comic opera company to run against, besides the regular plays," he said. "It looks as if we were knocked out."

"Fortunes of war," sighed Anderson Powell. "How much paper is there out?"

"About a hundred," answered Thompson, re-

ferring to tickets given away in exchange for advertising privileges.

"That gives us an audience of three hundred, with possibly another hundred drifting in." The bandmaster shook his head. "Wumple will have to fill us up somehow."

Wumple was the local manager, and he was immediately appealed to. He understood as well as the rest that to play to a theater that was hardly quarter filled on the opening night would never do.

"I'll send Jamison out with three hundred comps," he said; and so it was arranged. Jamison was a ticket man who understood his business, and in twenty minutes he had distributed the complimentary tickets just where they would do the most good, and given them out in such a way, too, that the receivers thought they were getting something of more than ordinary value.

By eight o'clock, the time for opening, patrons came in a little more briskly, and when the curtain went up the audience numbered over a thousand, six hundred of whom had paid their way in.

The uniforms of the band members had been given every attention, and the band certainly exhibited a fine appearance as it sat in the glare of the footlights. Yet their appearance created no applause. They were to realize what it means to face a critical metropolitan audience.

The opening piece was a fantastic arrangement of one of the late Patrick Gilmore's band compositions. The band had played it a dozen times or more, and had it "down fine," as Paul expressed it. In one place there was a little solo for the cornet which Paul was expected to play.

The composition opened very well, with a dash and a crash which instantly attracted attention. As it progressed, all of the players warmed up, and when the solo was reached the nervousness Paul had felt was gone. He struck in boldly, yet with great ease and sweetness, and the crash of the band at the finish could not drown out the applause that followed. It was the first applause received in New York, and it cannot be wondered at that Paul felt proud accordingly. When the piece ended the applause was renewed, and it was known that, so far as the Golden Cornet Band was concerned, the show had "caught the town."

The solo singer, Miss Donati, came next, and was fairly well received, and then, after a "slide-in" scene on the band, Horatio Calliwax appeared carrying a big valise, which he opened up on a folding three-legged stand.

"I'll first give you an imitation of the original Cohen, of the Bowery," he said, working among his make-ups. "Mr. Cohen is down at Coney Island with Mrs. Cohen and the six Cohenettes, to their annual bath." He turned away for a

moment, then reappeared with bushy black hair and whiskers, and a face that was a perfect Hebrew type. "Ach, my, Rachel, shust look at dot vater! Aint it lofly? Ikey, you kin dake off your shoes und stockings und paddle around, put don't let a shark cotched you py der doe. I don't dink ve had besser dake a path—it costs a kvoter. Ve safe dot kvoter und look at der vater. Ah, vos is los mid Ikey? He vill pe drowned! He vill pe drowned! Ikey, Ikey! look out mid yourself, und if you go under ton't lose dot nickel I gif you!"

This bit of pleasantry caused a big laugh, even from the Hebrews present, for they enjoy a joke on their countrymen quite as much as anybody. Imitations of an Irishman, a Dutchman, and a Turk followed, and then Calliwax branches off into well-known characters, from the President down to the Mayor, and then to a well-known East Side politician. The latter impersonation had been carefully studied, and as Calliwax strutted around talking about "de boys an' dat new deal wid Tammany," the laughter was uproarious.

"Calliwax is all right," murmured Thompson to Powell. "He's got big air-castles in his head, but he knows his turn, just the same."

"You want to get him under contract," replied Anderson Powell. "If you don't, some agent of

a continuous-performance house will gobble him up before you are aware."

"I'll get him under contract to-morrow," answered Thompson, and he was as good as his word, which showed his level-headedness, for forty-eight hours later Horatio Calliwax had offers from the managers of two rival continuous-performance houses well known to all New York theater-goers.

For the opening in the metropolis Thompson had added several special acts, and these also went very well, although adding nothing to the value of the original programme.

One act was that of a tight-rope dancer, who performed while blindfolded, something entirely new in that line. Madame Peripot was the dancer's name, and even Paul watched her with interest when she came out.

The rope upon which she performed was stretched from one wing to that opposite, each end being fastened to a ring and staple driven into an upright of the wall.

As the performance went on, Paul, during a second of silence, heard a strange noise behind him. Looking back he discovered that one of the uprights to which the rope was fastened was breaking away from the wall. It was likely to come down at any instant, bringing a lot of ropes and scenery with it.

CHAPTER XVI.

PAUL MEETS A FORMER ENEMY.

PAUL felt that something must be done, and done quickly. If the upright came down, it was likely one or more people would be hurt, and perhaps Madame Peripot would be fatally injured.

His first impulse was to yell to the tight-rope dancer, warning her of her peril. But just then the music struck up loudly, and no call would have been heard. Besides, he remembered that the lady was blindfolded, and to leap to the stage while in that condition was decidedly perilous.

Close beside Paul stood Bunglemann, the bass player, who was completely absorbed in the dancing upon the slender rope. Paul caught him by the arm and dragged him away from the wing.

"The timber is coming down!" he cried. "Help me hold it up!"

"Mine gracious!" gasped Bunglemann. "Of dot comes down somepoddy vill pe killed, alretty!"

He rushed up and put all of his weight against the beam. This steadied it for the time being,

and in the meantime Paul espied a bit of board lying close at hand. He raised it up to the top of the upright, and at the same time stopped a call-boy who was passing.

"Call some of the men," he said. "And bring the stage carpenter here, quick!"

His order was obeyed. Calliwax and Anderson Powell helped to hold the upright, and the breaking away from the wall ceased. In less than a quarter of a minute the stage carpenter appeared and climbed into the flies. He carried half a dozen small spikes and a heavy hammer with him, and, the music being warned to play loudly, he kept time with his hammer and drove the spikes home one after another; and the danger was over.

When Madame Peripot heard of what had been done she was profuse in her thanks to Paul.

"I shall not forget you for zat," she smiled, as she took his hand. "You vos von brave garçon—verra brave indeed. One time I perform in Paris, and ze rope break and I sprain my ankle. I no perform for a month afterward and lose seventeen thousand francs salary. I no forget you." And she did not, for before the engagement in New York closed she presented Paul with an elegant diamond scarfpin.

On Tuesday morning all of the daily papers but one gave the entertainment splendid notices. The paper which was the exception said the show was

fair, but by no means up to what the metropolis had a right to expect.

"That notice was written by Zimmer," grumbled Wumple. "He is mad because I won't give all of his friends passes. Wait till I see him next time, and I'll put a flea into his ear. I happen to know the managing editor of that paper, and Zimmer has got to treat us right."

Wumple was as good as his word. He went to see not only Zimmer, but also his friend, the managing editor, and the next day the sheet came out stating that "the performance is vastly improved, and now makes one of the most delightful entertainments New Yorkers have had the privilege of attending for a long while."

The favorable criticisms of the papers, and of those who had been given free tickets, filled the Opera House the next night, and everything moved along without a hitch.

"We are on the high road to success," said Anderson Powell gleefully, and it certainly looked as if he was right.

Since discharging Harry Stone, the bandmaster had been looking for a cornet player to fill his place. On Wednesday afternoon a rather shabby-looking individual, with a cornet in a blue cloth bag, came in to see him.

"I am from Boston, and I am looking for an engagement," he said. "I guess I am as

good a B-flat cornet player as you can find anywhere."

"One of my E-flat cornetists thinks of falling back on his B-flat," replied Anderson Powell, who was not favorably impressed with the appearance of the newcomer. "So I thought of trying a new E-flat player."

"Better give me an opening, sir. Just let me show you what I can do."

Perfectly willing to discover a "diamond in the rough," if the player should chance to be one, Anderson Powell let the applicant bring forth his cornet and prepare to play. With a flourish the fellow went through a popular air at break-neck speed.

"How's that?" he cried, finishing up with a flourish. "I don't think any of your men can do better than that."

"I don't think they can play faster," replied the bandmaster, who was not at all suited by such playing.

"Don't you think I'll do?"

"Hardly. I think I had better look around for the E-flat player."

The face of the applicant fell, and he muttered something under his breath.

"Maybe you don't know a good player when you hear him," he snarled.

"Perhaps not; but I certainly know a poor

player when I hear him," answered Anderson Powell sharply.

"Do you mean to call me a poor player?" demanded the performer savagely.

"We had better not argue the question. I don't want to engage you, and that settles it."

At that moment Paul and Horatio Calliwax came into the room.

When Paul caught sight of the newcomer he uttered a gasp of surprise.

"Sandy Bowen!" he ejaculated.

"Why—er——" stammered Bowen, who had already been taken completely by surprise, never dreaming but that Paul was still performing with Carson at the theater in Boston.

"You're the rascal who struck me down in Boston!" said Paul. "You ought to be locked up for it."

"He shall be locked up," put in Calliwax. "Why, it was only by a miracle that Paul escaped death," he added for Anderson Powell's benefit.

"If that is so the fellow ought certainly to suffer for his misdeeds," returned the bandmaster. He turned to Sandy Bowen. "What have you to say to all this?"

"I say it's a falsehood—that's what!" exclaimed Bowen, as he edged toward the door. "I reckon those chaps don't want me to get a job here."

Reaching the doorway he attempted to step out, but Horatio Calliwax rushed forward and barred his progress.

“Not so fast!”

“Let me pass!” howled Sandy Bowen, now thoroughly frightened. “If you don’t——”

He ended by shaking his fist in Calliwax’s face. A moment later he found himself tripped up and flat on his back.

“That for knocking poor Paul out!” cried the impersonator sternly. “Paul, let us give him a good thrashing and let him go.”

White with rage, Sandy Bowen leaped to his feet. His cornet had been placed in the cloth bag. Now the bag was raised and the cornet came down on Calliwax’s head. The impersonator staggered back against the wall.

“You brute!” gasped Paul, and made a dash for Bowen. But the rascal was too quick for him, and darted from the room, through a hallway, and into the street. In a moment more he was swallowed up in the crowd.

Paul attempted to follow him for half a block, and then gave up the chase. Returning to the theater, he found Horatio Calliwax nursing an ugly lump on his forehead.

“That fellow is a thorough villain,” growled the impersonator. “Paul, you want to keep your eyes open for him,”

"I certainly shall in the future. But I sincerely trust we may never meet again," he added, with a shudder.

"His playing is very poor," put in Anderson Powell. "He is not competent to fill any position in a professional band."

Here the subject was, for the time being, dropped. Little did Paul dream that he now had two deadly enemies in New York, and that he was destined to hear from both in the future.

CHAPTER XVII.

HORACE BROWLER'S ADVICE.

THE success of the Golden Cornet Band and Thompson's Entertainers continued in New York, and when the second week was begun Wumple begged Thompson and Anderson Powell to remain another two weeks.

Both the general manager and the bandmaster were willing, but contracts to appear in Philadelphia the next week, and in Washington the week following, had already been signed, and these could not be broken, so the second week in the metropolis was announced as a farewell, and the extra advertising served to pack the opera house from orchestra to gallery.

The E-flat cornet player mentioned by Powell had taken up a B-flat instrument, but Paul continued to be the leading B-flat player, for the solos he rendered in several selections could not be surpassed by any member of the band. During the last few days in New York Thompson and Powell got their heads together and asked Paul to play a solo as a separate number on the programme. At

first the youth hesitated, but finally consented, and on Thursday evening performed one of Sir Arthur Sullivan's beautiful compositions with variations. This took like wild-fire, and Paul was encored twice, and the daily papers the next day gave him splendid notices. Our hero was now on the highway to success, beyond a doubt, and for the time being Hiram Dunkirk and the hard life at Stoneville were entirely forgotten.

In the next morning's mail Paul received a note which was much of a surprise. It was from Horace Browler, the lawyer he had aided at the railroad smashup. The lawyer had returned to the metropolis, and asked the young cornetist to dine with him at five, at the Gilsey House. As there was no good reason for refusing, Paul accepted, and at the appointed hour he presented himself, dressed in his best.

"I am very glad to meet you again, my young friend," said Horace Browler cordially, as they shook hands. "Come over to yonder table, which I have had reserved for us. I presume you thought it queer that you had not heard from me before. The fact is, I was wrapped up in a legal matter in Hartford, which had to be attended to."

"I was not particularly looking to meet you again, sir," said Paul, who, however, saw the drift of affairs. "Although, to be sure, I am glad to know you," he added hastily.

"You don't suppose I could forget you, after what you did for me, Paul?"

"Not forget me, no; but—but I'll tell you right now, Mr. Browler, I am not looking for any reward for what I did."

"You certainly deserve one."

"Perhaps I do, but I don't want anything. I only did my duty, and—and—well, this dinner is on you, you know," and the boy smiled.

"You're as modest as you are brave. However, if you won't accept a reward, I shan't hurt your feelings by insisting. But remember one thing, I am your friend; and if you ever want any help, or legal advice, don't hesitate to come to me."

"I'll take the legal advice—and right now," answered Paul, and after the dinner was ordered and the first course served, he took Horace Browler into his confidence and told of his difficulties at Stoneville and with his unreasonable guardian, from beginning to end.

Horace Browler listened with close attention. He was a good reader of human nature, and he saw that Paul was telling him the plain truth. When the youth had finished he rubbed his chin reflectively.

"It's certainly a mixed-up affair," he said slowly. "Legally, this Hiram Dunkirk is your guardian, and if he is your father's sole executor,

it will be a hard matter to make him come to a settlement before you are twenty-one, unless you can show proof of fraud in the administration of the estate. Have you ever read your father's will?"

"Yes; but I was much younger then, and the legal phraseology bothered me."

"Naturally. I'll tell you what I will do. The will must be on record at the surrogate's office in the county in which Stoneville is situated. I'll have a legal friend up there look the matter up, and find out just what the will says. Perhaps your father's properties may be mentioned in detail. Of course the fact that the quarry company failed about the time your parent died complicates the case very much. But I'll do my best for you, Paul, and as quickly as I can."

"Do you think Mr. Dunkirk can hold me for the robbery of that four hundred and fifty dollars?"

"Perhaps he can, but I doubt if he'll try it, unless you crowd him into a corner—and we needn't do any crowding until we are certain we have a good case against him, and can bring him to account," concluded Horace Browler.

The two did not part until half-past six, and then it was on the best of terms. The lawyer lived in Harlem, and invited Paul to call upon him whenever he had the opportunity. He thought

it a good thing that Paul had written to Barrett Radley, and trusted the letter would reach the man without delay, and that a speedy answer would be forthcoming.

The run to the Quaker City was made Sunday morning, and by noon Paul, Calliwax, and a number of the others were settled down in a boarding house close to the theater in which they were about to perform.

Anderson Powell had been called away to Boston, for his brother, instead of getting better, had gradually become worse. The bandmaster had stated that he would be in Philadelphia by Monday evening sure, and during the meantime Frank Leland, the leading E-flat cornetist, was to take charge of rehearsals.

Leland was a good fellow in the main, but he had two failings. The first was his occasional fondness for strong drink, and the second was his jealousy of Paul and every other player in the band. It galled him exceedingly to hear the youth play solos and be applauded for it.

"Why don't you let me play solos?" he said to Anderson Powell more than once, but the bandmaster put him off by saying that E-flat cornet solos were not popular. As a matter of fact, Powell was too well satisfied with Paul to make any change.

On Monday morning Leland called the band

together and "put it through with bells on," as he himself stated it. He kept the players at work from ten o'clock to one, and then told them to come together again at three.

He had been particularly hard upon Paul, making the youth play certain unimportant passages over and over again. More than once the lad had been on the point of demurring, but he kept silent just to avoid trouble.

"Mr. Powell will be back to-night," he thought, "and then I'll tell him that I can't practice under Leland any more."

"Dot mans vos a corker," said Bunglemann, when the first rehearsal was over. "Look owit, Paul, or he vill make you bractise so much you can't vos blay to-night."

Bunglemann had hit the nail on the head. Insanely jealous of Paul, Leland had planned to exhaust the youth and thus make his initial appearance in the Quaker City a failure.

"His lips will be sure to give out to-night and he'll be roasted," muttered Leland to himself; and, feeling good, he went out and had several glasses of liquor. A little while later he met Horatio Calliwax and each treated.

As the reader knows, one of Calliwax's weaknesses of the past had been liquor, and it was an evil moment for both him and Leland when they met in a saloon frequented by theatrical

folks. Calliwax had managed to keep straight since joining Thompson's Entertainers, but now, urged to drink by Leland, the old craving for spirits returned.

"All right, Leland, old boy, I'm with you," he cried. "Have another on me."

"Correct; and you must have another on me," hiccoughed Leland, who had already drunk more than was good for him.

The treating went on for half an hour, when Calliwax suggested they try another saloon, "just for luck."

Leland agreed, and arm and arm they swaggered forth on the street. Leland could scarcely walk, but Calliwax bravely braced him up.

It was in this condition that Paul discovered them when on the way to the theater for the second rehearsal. At first he could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes. Then he rushed up and caught Calliwax by the arm.

"Calliwax, what does this mean?" he asked pleadingly. "Come along with me to the boarding house."

"You let Calliwax alone, Paul Graham," muttered Leland, with a hiccough. "Him and me's all right—see? all right."

"Come and take a glass with us, Paul," murmured Calliwax, but his face burned as he spoke, for he realized what Paul thought of the situation.

"I'll not drink—and you shan't drink any more," was the firm answer. "Why, Calliwax, do you want to lose your position, and after the success you have had?" went on Paul, in a low tone. "Come with me—do."

"He's a-going with—hic—me," blubbered Leland. "Let go o' him, Graham, or I'll—I'll knock your head off!"

"You shan't touch Paul!" burst out Calliwax. "He's my friend, and I guess he's right about drinking, Leland. Let's give it up until another time."

"I won't; I'll drink when I please and where I please," blustered Leland, with drunken gravity. "Come on; don't let that boy boss you."

"Calliwax will go with me," said Paul, and forced the two men apart. Before Leland could do anything further, the lad had his friend half-way up the block. Leland shook his fist after them.

What Paul did and said for the next couple of hours he never told a soul. But certain it is that when Calliwax appeared at the theater that night he was as sober as ever. His face was pale and his whole manner had changed. From that hour on Horatio Calliwax was almost, if not quite, a teetotaler.

"If it hadn't been for Paul I would have got

drunk, and that would have been the end of position and reputation," he thought. "The noble boy is right—liquor is my enemy and is to be treated accordingly."

The other players wondered greatly at the absence of both Leland and Paul during the afternoon, and the rehearsal which had been called did not come off. Paul came back at six o'clock and at once called Thompson aside.

"I want your advice," he said. "Mr. Powell has not returned from Boston. He left the band in charge of Frank Leland——"

"Well?"

"Leland has gone off on a blind, uproarious drunk."

"Whew!" Thompson gave a low whistle. "You are sure of this?"

"Yes. He is in a saloon three blocks from here, singing when he is not drinking and drinking when he is not singing."

The general manager's face fell.

"That is a bad state of affairs truly, Paul. What do you advise? Can you go on without him?"

"I think we can."

"Who will take charge?"

"I will—if you will trust me. Mr. Powell told me just what he wanted done. You know, he is my old teacher, and we are very friendly. Leland

was put in charge merely because he was the leading player."

"Then you take charge and do your level best, for Philadelphians are good judges of music; I can tell you that."

Paul waited no longer, but immediately called the band around him and explained the situation. He had made warm friends of nearly all the musicians, and they readily agreed to do their best under his leadership.

"You vos all right," said Bunglemann. "You go ahead; you vos pound to be a pandmaster sooner or quicker, anyvay!"—and this caused a general laugh.

Paul held only a short rehearsal, consisting of two compositions, of which, concerning the time of certain passages, he had been in doubt. The rehearsal cleared up the disputed points, and then he was ready for the evening's opening. In the meantime a first-class musician from the Philadelphia Musical Union had been hired to fill Leland's place.

As Thompson had anticipated, the theater was crowded that night, the sign "Standing Room Only" being displayed some time before the rise of the curtain. Paul saw the people pouring in and his heart beat rapidly as he felt the responsibility which rested upon his shoulders.

Just before the evening's entertainment began

Thompson made a brief address, explaining the fact of Anderson Powell's absence and stating that his place would be in part supplied by the band's most talented young cornetist, Master Paul Graham. Those who had heard of Paul clapped their hands at this.

Then the curtain went up, and stepping forth with his golden cornet, Paul led the band as Anderson Powell was wont to do, and then joined in when the most difficult passages were reached.

The youth was just playing one of the hard solos in the high notes, when he happened to glance toward one of the wings and was horrified to see Leland appear. The drunken musician had secured his baton and with unsteady steps was advancing directly toward the footlights.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE YOUNG BANDMASTER'S QUICK MOVE.

PAUL was filled with dismay when he caught sight of Leland, intoxicated and evidently in a rage, on his way toward the footlights of the stage.

Should the audience catch sight of the man in his present state it would create a terrible scene, and the likelihood was that the whole band would be hissed off.

Paul was hardly in a condition to think about what was best to be done. The solo he was playing demanded all of his attention. He played on as rapidly as he dared without spoiling the composition, and finished with a grand flourish. Then a sudden inspiration came to him, and backing toward the very wing Leland was approaching he bowed himself out of sight and directly into the individual, whom he sent sprawling on his back.

"Hi, you young scoundrel!" spluttered Leland, but the sounds of his drunken voice were drowned by a crash from the band, the players

taking up the next part of the overture without understanding why Paul had so suddenly deserted them.

"Wot do you mean by—hic—knocking me down?" demanded Leland, as he made a clutch for Paul's leg and thus assisted himself to his feet.

"Where are you going, Leland?" asked the boy, as coolly as he could, and gradually forcing the man backward.

"Going? Going on the—hic—stage, of course. Aint I the—hic—leader to-night?" and Leland glared at Paul savagely.

"You are not going on to-night," was the firm answer.

"Aint I? Who's going to—hic—stop me?"

"I am, for one. You are in no condition to show yourself. You had better hurry to the boarding house and go to bed."

"Don't talk to me, Graham. Let me pass. If you don't—I'll—hic—brain you!" and Leland raised his baton threateningly.

How the scene might have ended there is no telling. But just then Thompson and several of the supers appeared and interfered.

"I told you to lock him up in an empty dressing room until he sobered up," said Thompson to the supers severely. "Don't you let him up here again."

"He was going on the stage," explained Paul, and he related what had occurred.

"Great Christopher! That was a narrow escape truly!" murmured the manager. "Well, he shan't bother you again, that's certain."

Leland was led away in spite of his protestations. The band was now finishing the selection, and at its conclusion the curtain was rung down, and matters were explained all around.

"Powell will discharge him for that," said Akerson, an alto player. "He said he wouldn't have a drinker near him."

"He voss besser pe discharged," said Bungle-mann. "I likes mine peer, too, put I ton't vos trink so much like an ellerfunt, alretty!"

Calliwax, who was standing by, said nothing. But the grateful look he gave Paul spoke louder than words.

It was just before the band went on again that a telegram was received from Anderson Powell, which read: "Brother just died. Leland will have to lead until to-morrow."

Thompson smiled grimly when he read it.

"He will be greatly surprised when he learns the truth," he said.

Paul was shocked to hear of Carl Powell's death. Nevertheless, the youth did his best during the evening's entertainment, and all passed off with credit.

On the following morning Anderson Powell appeared, having traveled from Boston to Philadelphia during the night. He found Paul reading a complimentary notice of the band, published in a leading Philadelphia newspaper.

"Where is Leland?" asked the bandmaster, and Paul saw that he was in deep trouble.

In a few words Paul told him of all that had occurred. During the recital Thompson appeared, and he corroborated the youth's story, and added that one of the theater attachés had had Leland arrested for assault and battery.

"If that's the case I will have nothing more to do with Leland," said Anderson Powell. "But this places me in a worse predicament than ever. I must return to Boston at once, and as my brother's affairs are in a very mixed-up condition, there is no telling how soon I can get back to take charge."

"Then let Paul continue to lead," said Thompson quickly. "He does very well, and I think to have a boy leader is a big advertisement."

Anderson Powell smiled faintly. "Paul is all right," he said. "Why shouldn't he be? Didn't I teach him myself?" and he smiled again.

The matter was talked over for an hour, and at the end of that time it was arranged that Paul should take formal charge until such time as Powell should join the organization again. Le-

land was dropped from the company, and the Philadelphia player, who did very well, was engaged in his stead, he being perfectly willing to go on the road. To fill the break made by Paul, another B-flat cornetist was engaged. He was a nephew of Bunglemann, a fat German lad, who could not speak a word of English, but who could play fully as well as the average member of the band.

For the assault on the theater attaché Leland was sentenced to thirty days in jail, so none of the band players saw him again during the remainder of the stay in Philadelphia. Leland vowed he would get square with Paul, but the boy and the man did not meet again for years.

From Philadelphia the organization moved to Washington. As Paul had now entire charge, he went to work with a will, rehearsing several new airs and getting the old compositions down still finer than before. This kept him busy, and he had but little time in which to make the rounds of our beautiful capital. He did, however, manage to pay brief visits to the Smithsonian Institution, Patent Office, and to the Washington Monument.

It was on the return from the latter place that an adventure happened which Paul never forgot.

In some unaccountable way he was returning from the monument to the theater by a back street, when on chancing to pass a saloon he heard the

brassy notes of a cornet blown by a person with more lung power than music.

As was natural to a musician, he slowed up to ascertain what selection it was that the performer was playing.

It was a popular song, but so badly done that even the patrons of the saloon found fault and began to gibe the performer.

“You can’t play, you clam!”

“Hire out to some fish peddler. That’s your class!”

“Run him out of the place, Dilks. He’ll ruin yer reputation.”

“Come, clear out of here!” cried the bar-keeper, with a savage shake of his head.

“You promised me a half dollar to play six tunes,” said the musician.

At the sound of his voice Paul started.

Where had he heard that voice before?

All at once the truth burst upon him.

The itinerant performer was Sandy Bowen!

“Great Cæsar has he come to this—playing around saloons!” murmured the youth.

The saloon door now swung back and Bowen appeared. He was slightly flushed with liquor, and his left eye bore signs of a quarrel of the day previous.

“I want that half-dollar!” cried Sandy Bowen, in an ugly tone,

"You'll not get a cent here, so take yourself off," returned the barkeeper decidedly.

"So you are going to swindle me, are you?" howled Bowen.

"Swindle you!" The barkeeper, who was a passionate man, grew white. "Give me my club, Jeff," he exclaimed; "I'll teach him a lesson he won't forget."

In a moment a negro appeared with a long hickory stick.

Bowen stumbled into the street, but the barkeeper followed him up.

"Don't! don't!" shrieked the cornet player, shrinking away. "Don't hit me! I'll go away."

"I'm going to knock the daylights out of you," was the barkeeper's answer. "Come on, boys, let's have some sport."

At this cry half a dozen toughs poured out of the saloon, bent upon making a human football of Sandy Bowen.

Paul looked at Bowen and saw that the man was hardly able to stand.

As a matter of fact, Bowen had been quite sick.

"Don't! don't! Let me go!" cried Bowen, and tried to run, when the barkeeper tripped him headlong and struck him savagely in the back.

This action made Paul's blood boil. He forgot about how Sandy Bowen had assaulted him,

and rushing in, he caught the stick from the bar-keeper's hand.

"You contemptible brute, let this man alone!" he ordered.

"Who are you?" ejaculated the barkeeper, while the toughs paused in astonishment.

"Never mind who I am. I want you to let this man alone."

"Paul Graham!" burst from Sandy Bowen's lips. "Help me! Don't let them hit me again!"

And rising, he stepped behind Paul for protection.

"Let this man alone," repeated Paul. "If you don't you'll be sorry for it, that's all."

In another moment the youth and Bowen were surrounded by an ugly-looking half-dozen men, all bent upon mischief.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE MIDST OF THE FLAMES.

PAUL felt that both he and the man whom he had sought to protect were in a ticklish situation.

The youth had no love for Sandy Bowen, yet he was determined to assist the sick cornetist to a place of safety, if such a thing could be accomplished.

As the barkeeper of the saloon and the Washington roughs closed in Paul grasped the heavy stick tighter.

"The first one who lays a finger on this man or myself gets a crack on the head," he cried sternly.

At this the crowd hesitated.

"Give me my stick," said the barkeeper savagely.

"I will if you promise to leave us alone."

"He called me a swindler."

"You promised him some money if he would play for you."

"His playing is no good."

"That's no reason why you should abuse him. The least you can do is to let him go about his business."

"Is he your friend?"

"Just now he is. You let us move on and you can have your stick. If you bother us I shall defend myself and then bring a charge against this saloon."

The barkeeper scowled. He saw Paul was well-dressed, and he did not know but that the lad might be the son of some influential politician, for Washington is full of political "big guns." He hesitated, and then shoved his friends back.

"Go on wid you, and don't come near here again," he murmured finally, and Paul and Bowen passed on, the boy throwing the stick behind him.

"Gosh! but I'm glad I'm out of that," murmured Sandy Bowen, after several blocks had been covered and they came out on Pennsylvania Avenue.

"You ought to be," returned Paul simply. Then he looked at Bowen narrowly. "Are you sick?"

"Yes, I've been kind of sick ever since I—I left New York."

"See here, Bowen, why don't you turn over a new leaf?" burst out the boy suddenly. "What is the use of letting yourself go to the dogs like this?"

"I—I don't know." Sandy Bowen hung his head. "You were kind to stand up for me after what I did to you."

"I know that. But I'm willing to help you more, if you'll promise to leave me alone in the future."

"Oh, I won't touch you again, you can be sure of that."

"It was a mean way to treat me, but I don't bear you any ill-will."

"I know I did wrong, but," Bowen hesitated, "to tell the truth, I didn't want to knock you out so hard in Boston. When you keeled over I was scared to death, and left the city with a fearful load on my mind."

"How are you off for money?" asked Paul, to shift the subject.

"I haven't got a cent."

"What will you do if I loan you five dollars?"

"Say, Graham, will you really loan me that amount?"

"I will if you'll promise to brace up and not to drink it away."

"I won't drink it away, and I'll brace up and do my best to get a regular job. I've got a chance to join a band and orchestra in Baltimore, and was playing the saloons trying to raise the carfare and some money to buy food and medicine."

Paul put his hand in his vest pocket. "Here are the five dollars," he said, handing them over.

“Now do brace up, and when you are settled let me hear from you.”

And so they parted, but not before Bowen had wrung the lad's hand and inwardly blessed him for his goodness. It was the last Paul saw of his former enemy for many months. But he heard from Bowen, who obtained the situation in Baltimore and did as well as could be expected from one of his inferior musical ability.

From Washington the combination went to Harrisburg and Pittsburg, and then struck out for Cleveland. Paul led the band at the two places first mentioned, but at Cleveland Anderson Powell came on for several days.

His visit was of high importance to Paul. After listening to all the youth had done, he held a conference with Thompson.

“If you are satisfied with Paul, I'll leave him in sole charge,” he said.

“Satisfied!” cried Thompson. “I am more than satisfied. He's not only a splendid band-master, but his cornet solo is one of the most taking things on our programme. That lad is a wonder.”

So Paul was called in, and an hour later he found himself at the head of the band for good, or so long as he should desire the position.

“My brother's estate was a large one,” explained Anderson Powell. “And it will pay me

to remain in Boston and see that everything goes straight."

"I wish I knew how my father's estate stood," sighed Paul. "If Hiram Dunkirk is trying to beat me out of anything like a fortune, I want to know it."

"What of that lawyer in New York who was going to look into the matter?"

"I have one letter from him, saying that his friend, Clinton Fairfield, went up to Stoneville and vicinity and investigated, and found things terribly mixed. He thinks Hiram Dunkirk mixed 'em up on purpose, and I guess he's about right. He says we had best wait until we hear from Barrett Radley."

"Well, any time he wants to see you notify me and I will come on and take charge during your absence," concluded Anderson Powell.

Winter was now coming on and the opening in Cleveland was attended by a heavy fall of snow, which kept a large number of patrons away from the theater for the first two nights.

"This thing can't be helped," said Thompson, as he came into the green room and stamped the snow from his shoes. "I trust it clears to-morrow."

"And I trust the janitor makes this theater warmer," put in Calliwax. "It's as cold as a barn."

"The house manager said they were going to fix the heater pipes to-morrow sure," answered Paul. "I asked him about it, for a fellow can't play well when his lips are blue with the cold."

Despite the cold, the band and other performers did their best, and as a consequence when it did clear off the day following the theater was packed.

As Thompson had said, Paul now performed a solo regularly, in addition to leading the band, and never had he played better than now. The solo rendered was a variation of the popular ballad, "The Old Oaken Bucket," followed for an encore by "Down on the Suwanee River." The latter always brought down the house, for in it Paul did some marvelous triple-tonguing.

If Paul was becoming famous so was Horatio Calliwax. For the week at Cleveland Calliwax had introduced an impersonation of a well-known local baseball leader, and this took very well. He had now added a couple of songs to his "turn," and these were also favorably received. In his odd moments he had given much attention to his alto-horn playing, and under Paul made a promising pupil.

As I have said, the theater was packed on the third night. Outside it was bitterly cold and a strong wind was blowing.

The first half of the programme had gone with

much applause, and the curtain was just on the point of going up on Part II. when Calliwax, as he ascended the narrow stairs from the green room, smelt smoke. He paused and looked around him.

A moment later a faint crackling reached his ears, coming from the furnace room, situated directly under the orchestra floor. Downstairs he went again, three steps at a time, and sped in the direction whence the smell of smoke came.

As he entered a narrow passageway he and the janitor of the theater ran full tilt into each other, and both went down flat from the shock.

"Save yourself! The furnace room is on fire!" yelled the janitor, who was the first to recover. "Fire! fire! fire!" he cried out, as he leaped away toward the green room.

The call was taken up on all sides. The curtain had just rolled up when Thompson heard it. As quick as a flash he stepped out in front of the footlights.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said coolly, "I must beg you to retire from the theater at once, as there is a fire in the building behind this—a fire in the building behind this!" he repeated, and then disappeared.

This happy inspiration saved the audience from becoming panic-stricken, in which case many must have been killed and wounded. As it was, all

got out as rapidly as possible, but no one was crushed or knocked down.

The band was on the stage awaiting Paul's entrance when Thompson made his speech. They now caught up their instruments and rushed off.

"Go out the back way!" cried Thompson. "That was a fake story. The fire is in the cellar!"

"Where vos Baul?" demanded Bunglemann, who thought a good deal of his young leader.

"Here I am," cried Paul, coming from below, with a flushed face. "I have just been turning on some of the automatic-sprinklers."

"All of you get out!" went on Thompson. "A theater is no place to be in during a fire."

"Where is Calliwax?"

"Calliwax is below, in the passageway," put in the janitor. "I thought he followed me up."

"Calliwax! Calliwax!" called out Paul. No answer came back. "If he's down there something is wrong with him!" And away darted the young bandmaster through the thickening smoke in quest of his friend.

CHAPTER XX.

PAUL SAVES A FRIEND.

“COME back, Paul! Come back!”

It was Thompson who called out, and his cries were taken up by a dozen others.

But Paul did not heed them. He was bent upon learning what had become of Horatio Calliwax ere it was too late.

“The foolish poy!” sighed Bungleemann; “he vill pe purned up alretty!”

The smoke was now so thick at the back of the stage that the majority of the performers waited no longer, but made a dash for the alleyway in the rear of the theater.

Thompson alone hesitated.

“Where was Calliwax when you saw him last?” he asked, clutching the janitor by the arm.

“Close to the door of the furnace-room,” was the answer. “Let me go! We can’t save him. He ran into me and both of us went down.”

“And you would leave him to his fate!” ejaculated Thompson in disgust. But the janitor was already running for safety and did not hear him.

“Hang me if I don’t follow Paul!” muttered the general manager, and off he went.

The smoke was now so thick that the lights in the passageway shone dimly, as through a heavy fog. To keep his breath Thompson bent low and slid, rather than stepped, down the narrow stairs. Then a bright glare ahead burst upon his sight, and between that glare and himself he saw Paul, with the insensible form of Calliwax slung over his shoulder.

“Paul!”

“Thompson, is that you? Help me! I can’t carry him very well alone.”

Paul staggered toward the stairs. In another moment he and Thompson were carrying Calliwax between them. To get the dead weight up those narrow stairs was no easy task.

“The fire is creeping up!” gasped Paul, who was in the rear. “Oh, look at that!”

With a crash a wooden partition had gone down, and now the flames began to leap up under the very stairs they were treading. The boy staggered back and dodged for an instant under where an automatic fire sprinkler was playing. Catching his breath, he staggered on, with Thompson dragging Calliwax up in front.

Half a minute—a time that seemed an age—and they stood on the stage floor. Calliwax was now recovering, and began to cough. But before he was able to speak Paul and Thompson had him outside. As they emerged a number of fire-

men from the nearest fire-engine house rushed into the building, dragging two lines of hose with them.

The alarm had caused a large crowd to gather, and presently the street was blockaded for several squares. It was reported that half a dozen had lost their lives in the fire, but this was of course untrue. As a matter of fact, not even an injury was received.

The firemen understood their business well and went to work vigorously, so that the flames were confined almost wholly to the furnace and dressing-rooms. In an hour the flames were completely under control, and before midnight the last spark was extinguished, and Thompson, the local manager, and several others were speculating upon the chances of opening up again for the balance of the week.

"I suppose we can do it," said Paul, "but I don't approve of it. People will be so nervous we won't have half a house."

"It will be a big advertisement, and we'll have a big crowd," insisted the local manager, and by employing a large number of carpenters he had everything in readiness to go on the very next evening.

But Paul's judgment had been correct. Folks in Cleveland were too scared to enter the theater just yet, and only two hundred admission tickets

were sold at the box-office. Seeing this, Thompson canceled the engagement and laid all hands off until the opening in Chicago on the week following.

Calliwax was extremely grateful to Paul for what the youth had done for him.

"You saved my life, Paul," he said fervently. "You are one lad out of a thousand."

Calliwax had lost nearly all of his outfit, and Paul had lost one suit of street clothing, while his band suit had suffered a good deal from water, smoke, and dirt. But all were making money, so the damages were soon repaired, and matters went on as smoothly as before.

The engagement in the great city by the lakes was to last for two weeks. The first week passed away swiftly. At each performance the theater was packed, and Thompson was correspondingly pleased. But on Saturday he came to Paul with a troubled look on his face.

"Here's a state of things," he declared. "You know we bought off next week's time from the Golden Spade Company."

"Yes."

"Well, the new manager of the company says the old manager had no right to cancel the time, and he is coming on from Indianapolis to claim it."

"What does the local manager say?"

"Says it is none of his business, as we fixed it up between ourselves. He would like us to stay, but the 'Golden Spade' is playing to big houses, too, so he's not particular."

"If we have to get out where are we going to?" asked Paul, after an awkward pause.

"I don't know. We are booked for St. Louis week after next, and I don't know of a single decent date open for next week. I've a good mind to hang on here."

"Better consult a first-class lawyer first and see how we stand," was Paul's advice.

This was followed, and after a consultation lasting several hours, and after the former manager of the Golden Spade Company had been telegraphed to, the lawyer announced that Thompson's organization undoubtedly had the best right to the theater for the week to come.

"Then I'll keep it," announced Thompson, and wired the new manager of the Golden Spade Company accordingly. In an hour a return message came back.

"You'll get out or we'll pitch you out," it read.

"This is going to be interesting," laughed Paul.

"Never mind, 'forewarned is forearmed,' you know," returned the general manager. "We'll keep our eyes open for Ulmer Vascoss and his doings"—for Vascoss was the advance agent of the Golden Spade Company.

An hour later Bunglemann came in all out of breath.

"Mr. Thompson! Mr. Graham!" he gasped. "Vot you dinks? I vas me py der Alley Elevated Railroat chust now und a pill-poster vos coferin' our pills mid sheets of der Golden Spade Gompany, alretty, so qvick!"

"What!" ejaculated Thompson. "I wonder who gave him orders to do that?"

"Some of this Vascoss' work, I'll wager," answered Paul.

"We'll soon stop it," growled Thompson.

Away he rushed, Paul and Bunglemann with him. Inside of a quarter of an hour they had located the bill-poster and his assistant in the very act of covering a twenty-sheet board now exhibiting the best of Thompson's lithographs.

"Hi, you, stop that!" cried Thompson, rushing up and catching the bill-poster's arm.

"Who are you?" demanded the knight of the paste-bucket.

"I am Burd Thompson, the general manager of the Thompson's Entertainers and Powell's Golden Cornet Band organization. What right have you to cover our bills?"

"Orders from the office," was the cool answer.

"Orders from the office? Why, I left orders to put up additional bills calling attention to our stay for another week."

"I don't know nothing about that." And the bill-poster started to work again.

"Stop! I say." Thompson's voice was now firm. "I guess I see through your game. Vascoss bought you up. But it won't work. You touch another one of my bills and I'll call a policeman and have you arrested."

"Yes, but see here——"

"I won't argue with you. Paul, I'm going down to the bill-posting company's office and have matters straightened out. If this chap tries to go ahead with his work, have him arrested on the spot. Bunglemann, you stay here, too, will you?"

"You pet I vill!" replied the bass player. "Dot feller besser look owit, oder I thrown him head first py his baste-bot, alretty!"

Thompson rushed off without another word. The bill-poster looked undecided. As a matter of fact, Vascoss had bribed him heavily to cover the Thompson bills with all possible dispatch.

"You aint got no right to stop me," he said, with an uneasy glance at Paul.

"You heard what Mr. Thompson said," was the youth's cool answer. "If you go ahead I shall certainly carry out his instructions. The best thing you can do is to return to the office and find out how the matter is settled."

The bill-poster attempted to argue. Finally he

decided to follow Paul's advice. He was just preparing to jump into his wagon with his assistant, when a stranger came upon the scene.

"Hi! what are you stopping this posting for?" cried the newcomer. "You said you would put it through before noon."

The newcomer was Ulmer Vascoss, the advance agent of the Golden Spade Company.

CHAPTER XXI.

ALMOST A PITCHED BATTLE.

THE bill-poster looked from Vascoss to Paul and then at Bungleemann.

"This young fellow represents the manager of the Thompson organization," he said in a low tone.

"I don't care what he represents," stormed Vascoss, taking in the situation at a glance. "I want you to go ahead as I directed."

"If he continues to cover our bills I'll have him arrested," said Paul, his eyes flashing. "Who are you?"

"I am Ulmer Vascoss, the advance agent of the Golden Spade Company. I'd like to know who you are?" went on the agent, with a sneer.

"I am bandmaster of Powell's Golden Cornet Band."

"Oh, the fakirs that travel with Thompson, eh?"

"Ton't you call us fakirs!" burst out Bungleemann. "Of you does I vill hit you von in der nose—hear dot? Ve vos chentlemans, alretty!"

"Oh, shut up, Dutchy!" growled Ulmer Vas-

coss. "Go on with your work"—this to the bill-sticker.

"Cover up one bill more and you go to the station-house," said Paul warningly. "Bunglemann, you'd better look around for a policeman."

"See here, boy, I want you to attend to your business," howled Vascoss.

"I am attending to my business. Thompson left me here to defend our bills, and I'm going to do it."

"Where is Thompson?"

"Gone to the bill-posting company's office to adjust matters."

"Vy ton't you go dere?" put in Bunglemann. "You can't do noddings here, I pet you dot!"

"Shut up, you Dutchman!" roared Vascoss; but the words had scarcely left his lips when Bunglemann caught the paste-brush from the bill-sticker's hand and advanced on the irate man.

"Dake dot pack, or I vos cofer you mid paste from head bis feet!" answered the bass player threateningly.

"Heavens! don't touch me!" yelled Vascoss in alarm, and began to retreat. Bunglemann followed him, and a crowd began to collect, and then a policeman appeared.

"What's the row here?" demanded the blue-coat.

"He vos call me a Dutchman!" puffed Bun-

glemann. "I ton't vos allow anypotty to call me names?"

"Take him away!" yelled Vascoss, who wore a brand-new winter overcoat, and was afraid of having it ruined.

"The trouble is just here, officer," explained Paul. "These show bills are ours, and we have paid to have them up another week. This man, the manager of a rival show, wants the bill-poster to cover the bills with some of his own. I was left on guard by our manager to prevent the bills being touched until the matter was settled at the bill-posting company's office."

The policeman turned to Vascoss.

"Is this true?"

"We claim these showboards for this week," blustered Vascoss. "We are not going to stand aside for anybody."

"Well, I won't allow any rowing about it on the street," said the policeman, after a pause.

"I suggested he come to the office with me," said Paul.

"Wouldn't that be fair?" asked the policeman.

"I won't touch the boards again till I get orders," said the bill-poster, and hopping into his wagon with his assistant, he drove off.

Seeing this, there was nothing for Vascoss to do but to take Paul's advice, and off the pair started, with Bunglemann in their wake.

Suddenly Paul stopped short.

"Look here, Bungleemann," he said in a whisper, "you go to the office with Vascoss. I'll see if everything is right at the theater."

The bass player agreed, and a moment later Paul hurried away alone.

Vascoss' actions had made the young band-master more suspicious than ever, and, hailing a passing cab, he was driven to the theater with all possible speed.

He found a large express wagon loaded with trunks and scenery backed up in the alleyway, close to the stage door.

The expressman was arguing with the janitor of the theater about taking the stuff in.

"It's got to go in—they's my orders," the expressman was saying. "So open up for me and be quick about it."

"Whose stuff have you there?" asked Paul quietly.

"Trunks and scenery of the Golden Spade Company."

"They can't come in here—at least, not this week."

"What?"

"You heard what I said. Patterson, not a trunk comes in here, understand?"—the latter to the janitor.

"All right, Mr. Graham," and the janitor, who

had taken a great liking to the young bandmaster, winked.

“But I don’t understand——” began the expressman, when another man, the general manager of the Golden Spade Company, rushed into the alleyway.

Seeing the man was in a fighting humor, Paul slipped into the theater and pulled the janitor in after him. Then the youth bolted the big stage door.

In vain those outside hammered for admission.

Paul knew that “possession is nine points of the law,” and he was determined to “hold the fort” until Thompson appeared.

The general manager of the Golden Spade company rushed round to the front of the theater, only to find that also locked.

Finally he ordered the expressman to dump the trunks and scenery in the alleyway, and this was done.

In an hour Thompson came back, his face covered with a broad smile. He had not only brought the bill-posting company to terms, but he had got out an injunction against the Golden Spade company, restraining it from interfering in any way with the occupancy of the theater for one week longer.

When the Golden Spade people heard of this latter move they were furious, and threatened to

go to law at once. But on taking legal advice they discovered that they could make but a poor showing in court, and so they ended by letting the matter drop and sneaking their trunks and scenery from the alleyway some time during the night.

"We want to be on our guard against those chaps," said Thompson when it was all over. "They'll remember us and do us an injury if they can."

A report of what had happened crept into the daily papers. One journal made quite a spread of it, and as a consequence the theater, during the week following, was more crowded than ever.

From Chicago the company went to St. Louis. Winter was now at its height, and at St. Louis they encountered almost a blizzard. It snowed for four days continually, and during that time the theater was nearly empty.

"We must take the bad with the good," said Thompson cheerily, when Paul looked sober. "Why, if every week on the road paid, we would all be millionaires in no time."

"No matter, I hate to take a step backward," answered the young bandmaster.

Paul's solos on the cornet were now worthy of the largest houses. He was in reality a star. For his playing he received a good round sum per week, and for leading the band Anderson Powell allowed him an additional amount.

"If this keeps on I won't want what money Hiram Dunkirk is holding back on me," he said to himself. "But that miserly old codger must be brought to justice, and that is all there is to it."

From St. Louis the company proceeded to Kansas City, Omaha, and then to Minneapolis. At the latter place two of the musicians fell sick—an alto and a tenor player—and Paul had to call upon several local musicians to fill their places.

Then came some trouble with the local musical union, and as a consequence nearly everybody in the theater went on strike.

"Here's a pickle, truly," sighed Thompson. "I don't blame you, Paul, but what we are to do I don't know."

"Let us run the theater ourselves," suggested Calliwax. "I've done such work lots of times when I was—ahem—on the—ah——"

"When you were barnstorming," laughed Thompson. "All right, I'm willing, if we can manage it," he added, after a moment's thought.

So it was arranged that Calliwax should take charge of the scene-shifting, while Thompson looked after the box-office, along with the local manager, who did not dare to leave. Calliwax hired two good-natured negroes to assist him, and spent an afternoon in giving the colored men instructions.

Those on strike heard of what was going on

and began to murmur. At last, just as the company was ready to open, a letter was handed to Thompson, which read as follows:

“We are not to be cheated out of our rights. If you try to open up you’ll be sorry for it for the rest of your life. We mean business, and if you want to escape with a whole skin, be warned in time.

“THE WATCHERS OF MINNEAPOLIS.”

CHAPTER XXII.

A BATTLE WITH THE SCENE-SHIFTERS.

"WHAT do you think of that?" said Thompson, as he handed the note around for perusal.

"I don't think the musical union sent that," said Paul promptly. "The players are too much of gentlemen, even if they are acting rather unreasonably."

"It's those scene-shifters," said Calliwax. "They are a half-drunken crowd, and if I owned the house I would have discharged them long ago."

"I believe myself it's the scene-shifters," said Thompson. "The question is, what can they do to annoy us?"

"I don't see that they can do anything if we keep them out of the theater," replied Paul. "Of course they may waylay us on the streets. We had better not travel around alone while we remain in this city."

"I'll carry a pistol with me after this," declared Horatio Calliwax, and others said the same.

That evening about half-past six the three

scene-shifters applied at the stage door for admittance.

It was promptly denied.

"All right, we'll git in fast enough," grinned the leader, and marched off, followed by his companions. All of the trio had been drinking heavily.

"How will they do it?" mused Paul. "I'm certain they won't pay their admissions."

"They ought to be watched," said Thompson, with a serious shake of his head.

"I'll watch them!" cried Paul, and an instant later he was following the trio. To avoid being recognized, he turned up his coat collar and pulled his hat far down over his eyes.

The trio of scene-shifters left the theater alley and passed down to a side street. Here they entered the hallway of a building which was but half occupied. Paul heard them tramp up one flight of stairs after another, until the upper floor was gained. Here they paused at the foot of a step-ladder leading to a scuttle in the roof.

"It's a good thing I thought to leave the theater scuttle unlocked," said one of the scene-shifters. "Getting across the roofs will be dead easy."

"We must be careful after we enter the theater," said another. "They may have somebody up in the flies on the watch."

“We’ll be careful enough, Barney,” grumbled the third. “But after we are up there, how about turning the water on?”

“That will be easy, too. First we can set the pipe up so that it will pour down directly on the stage. Then I’ll fix a long cord to the shut-off, running it through the window to the roof, and the trick is done. Come on.”

And up the ladder went the three men.

Without waiting an instant, Paul rushed back to the theater and called Thompson aside.

“They are plotting to drown us out on the stage!” cried the young bandmaster, and gave the details.

“We’ll nab them at their game,” answered Thompson. “Calliwx, go out and hunt up a couple of policemen.”

Five minutes later Thompson, Paul, and several other members of the organization tiptoed their way up to the flies.

There was a long winding stair and then a “bridge” to cross, and they found themselves close to the skylight.

“Hist! here they come!” whispered Paul, as the skylight was softly raised. “We had better get out of sight.”

Back behind some flies they crouched, and in a moment the three scene-shifters had dropped on the flooring beside them.

"It's good we know the ropes here," whispered one. "It's so dark we can hardly see."

"Hush! don't talk!" replied the leader, and then the trio became silent.

In ten minutes more the gang had fixed a heavy hose pipe, put up for fire purposes, so that the nozzle pointed directly down upon the stage.

Then the string was attached to the shut-off, as had been planned.

All was now ready. The rascals had but to pull the string, when the water would run at a terrific force, and the stage, with all upon it, would be drowned out completely.

"Let them go!" whispered Thompson suddenly. "I'll fix 'em!"

As the rascals retreated to the roof again Thompson rushed forward and screwed the nozzle of the hose pipe shut.

Then he motioned all to go below again.

Calliwax had arrived with the policemen, who were speedily acquainted with the state of affairs and volunteered to watch the scene-shifters and catch them at work.

At the proper time the curtain rolled up and the band began the first number of the programme.

This was the signal to turn on the water, and all of the rascals on the roof pulled on the cord.

Of course, thanks to Thompson, no rush of

water followed. A few drops came down, and that was all.

The policemen now rushed forward, and a fierce fight with the plotters ensued.

Paul, on the stage, could hear the racket above plainly, and quickly ordered the band to play louder, and ordered the bass drummer to join in, even though the music called for silence on the part of that instrument. The overture was, consequently, hardly a success from a musical standpoint, but it drowned the noise of the disturbance, and that was just then of more importance than anything else. By the time the playing was over the three scene-shifters were under arrest and on the way to jail. Later on each got sixty days for his rascality. But to this day none of them can understand how their plans were discovered.

"That was a narrow shave," said Paul when it was all over. "Imagine the band playing and that waterfall coming down on us!"

"We would have got the grand laugh," said one of the clarionet players, "and the chances are the audience would have guyed us for the rest of the week."

Seeing they could do nothing to stop the performances, the musicians of the city declared the strike off, and those whom Paul had hired begged to come back, but the young bandmaster was obdurate.

“ You tried to cripple us, and now you’ll have to make the best of it,” and he did not engage any more outsiders until Milwaukee was reached, a week later.

From Milwaukee the organization went to several smaller towns, and then to Detroit. At the latter place Thompson had a number of very intimate friends, for the city was his birthplace, and the entire company, including the band, enjoyed a dinner which was literally a feast. At this dinner Calliwax gave a few humorous impersonations and Paul played a very difficult solo, and both performers made a score of new friends.

From Detroit they moved to Buffalo for two nights, and then worked their way by one-night stands across New York State to Brooklyn and then back to New York. Summer was now again at hand.

In the meantime, however, matters of great national importance were occurring. The long-standing trouble between Spain and the United States, brought on largely by the war between Spain and her Cuban colony, had resulted in the blowing up of the battleship *Maine* in Havana harbor, and now war was declared between Uncle Sam and the upholders of the banner of Castile.

“ This beats all ! ” cried Paul after hearing the news. “ My, but won’t we just punish those Dons for treating the Cubans so shamefully ! ”

"I don't believe the war will amount to much," replied Calliwax. "Spain hasn't got the resources we have."

"And she hasn't got the backbone," added the young bandmaster. "We will knock them out in the first fight."

The blowing up of the battleship *Maine* was followed, in May, by Admiral Dewey's great victory in Manila Bay. In the meantime thousands of our soldiers were gathering at various encampments throughout the Eastern States, preparatory to an invasion of Cuba. When the recruits began to get together Paul grew very enthusiastic.

"I've got half a notion to join the army," he said to his friends. "I believe I could fight as good as the majority of the soldiers."

"Maybe you had better join some government band," suggested Calliwax.

"Just the thing!" ejaculated Paul. "Of course they'll want to take some musicians to Cuba."

But the manager shook his head at this proposition.

"You must stay with the organization," he said. "If you don't, our tour will be ruined."

And so, for the time being, Paul had to let the matter rest. But from that time on patriotic selections from the band were all the rage.

Paul, Calliwax, and a number of the others had

put up at a well-known and comfortable theatrical boarding-house in West Twenty-fifth Street. Paul had just finished breakfast one morning when a small boy appeared with a note for him. The note was written in an uneven hand, on a half-sheet of note-paper, and ran as follows:

“ Paul Graham : Please come down to the docks at the foot of West Eleventh Street. An old friend, with important news, would like to see you on the oyster boat of Corey & Basswood. Come at once.”

The communication mystified Paul very much. Who had sent it?

He looked around for the messenger, but the urchin had disappeared, having been particularly cautioned not to wait for an answer or to be questioned.

He read the letter over several times. He would have shown it to Calliwax, but the impersonator had rushed off half an hour before, to obtain an interview with a prominent military man who was stopping in New York, and whom Calliwax intended to impersonate at the opening in Philadelphia.

“ I’ll go down and see who it is,” murmured Paul, at length, and put on his overcoat and hat. “ Perhaps it’s some friend from Stoneville who

has news of Hiram Dunkirk's doings. But if he's a friend, I don't see why he couldn't sign his name," he added, much disturbed.

It did not take the lad long to reach the neighborhood mentioned. At this spot on the North River there is a long string of flat-boats, or scows, drawn up side by side, where a score or more of dealers in oysters and clams do a thriving wholesale business. Paul walked slowly along until the sign of Corey & Basswood caught his eye.

The scow bearing the firm's name was one of the smallest and meanest-looking of the row. It had not been painted for years, and the sign was so weather-beaten it could scarcely be deciphered. In front of the place were a lot of barrels filled with oyster shells. No one seemed to be around, and the front doors, open on the other scows, were tightly closed on this one.

Paul hesitated for a minute, then ran down the incline and tried the doors. One was unlocked, and he stepped inside.

"Hullo, Paul Graham!" cried a voice from behind a lot of barrels. "Glad to see you. Come this way!"

The voice did not sound altogether familiar, yet the greeting was cheery enough, and Paul hurried forward, wondering who the speaker could be.

Scarcely had he covered fifty feet of the length

of the scow than he found himself pounced upon from behind. He struggled to release himself, and glancing over his shoulder, discovered that his assailant was Mike Hooney!

"You scoundrel, let go of me!" gasped the youth, realizing all in a flash how he had been trapped.

"But I aint lettin' go just de same," replied Mike Hooney, with a horrible grin. "Stand still, or it will be de worst fer yer! Bring up dat rope, Captain Scully."

"Let go, I say!" continued Paul; and now he bent down, and with a quick twist almost flung Hooney over his head. The tough let out a yell of alarm.

"Hit him wid de club, captain!" he cried. "Hit him, quick, afore he raises de hull neighborhood!"

At these words a second individual, tall, black-bearded, and with a wicked face, sprang into view. In one hand he held a rope, and in the other a belaying-pin.

"You had better give in, boy," he said roughly. "You have no chance against us. Duff, lock the door, so nobody else can come in."

At these words a third man, a sailor, came into view. He ran to the door and locked it. And Paul realized that he was a prisoner. He struggled for a few seconds longer; then, as Cap-

tain Scully threatened him with the belaying-pin, he became silent.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, glancing first at the nautical men and then at Hooney.

"Maybe yer don't remember me," sneered the tough.

"I do—very well."

"Do yer, now? You'll remember me more afore I'm done wid yer."

"What is your game? Tell me at once. If you want money you've fooled yourself, for I have less than a dollar in my pocket."

"Just de same, I'll take dat diamond sparkler from yer scarf," grinned Hooney, and snatched away the gift of Madame Peripot.

"Hi! Give me back that diamond!" ejaculated Paul, and in his anger he rushed at the tough, and with one well-directed blow laid him flat.

But that blow settled the contest so far as the youth was concerned. Alarmed at the situation, Captain Scully and Duff, the sailor, leaped in. Down came the belaying-pin, and Paul saw a million stars dance before his eyes. As he staggered back, Duff caught him around the arms and chest, and in a trice the captain made him a close prisoner.

Finding himself next to helpless, Paul started to cry out. But Mike Hooney had prepared for

such an emergency, and drawing from his pocket a pitch-plaster, he scrambled up and clapped it over the youth's mouth.

Paul was now deprived not only of his voice, but a large part of his wind as well, and was consequently, in no condition to renew the fight. Yet, not satisfied with binding and plastering him, the three rascals wound him up in a large piece of sail-cloth, covering him from head to feet. Then a rope was tied about the long-looking bundle, and he was carried forth from the oyster scow to where a large rowboat lay in waiting.

The next half-hour was one of great suffering to Paul. He could scarcely breathe, and expected every minute to be smothered to death. He found himself riding over the water. Presently he was lifted up to the deck of a schooner, the *White Thrush*, and carried to the forward hatch. The sail-cloth was removed, and he caught a brief glance of his surroundings. Then down he went into darkness, the hatch was closed over him, and he was left to his reflections.

Ten minutes more and the tramping of sailors' feet and the creaking of ropes and blocks told him that the schooner was getting under way. He wondered to where the ship was bound. He would have been much astonished, and more disconcerted than ever, had he been told that her destination was Rio de Janeiro, Brazil!

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN ENCOUNTER ON THE SCHOONER.

THE air in the forward hold of the *White Thrush* was far from pure and smelt strongly of tar and bilge water. What little Paul could get of it, with the pitch-plaster over his mouth, made him sick, and he would have given a good deal to have been safe in New York once more.

Hour after hour went by, until the pitching of the schooner told him that the harbor had been left behind and they were now on the bosom of the mighty Atlantic. During this time he had been working at his bonds, and at last one of his hands came free. The other soon followed, then the pitch-plaster was torn away, and soon he found himself entirely at liberty within the confines of the *White Thrush's* forward hold.

All was still black around him, and he had to walk about with caution, for fear of dashing out his brains against the boxes and barrels which were piled up on every side. Occasionally he could hear the tramp of feet overhead, but that was all.

"I'm in a pickle, and no mistake," he muttered dismally. "I wonder what they intend to do

with me? Like as not, if the ship is bound for some distant port, they'll try to make me become a member of the crew. Such things have occurred before. Well, they'll have a job trying to make me do their wishes," and he set his teeth hard at the thought.

Paul had a match-case with him, and presently he drew it forth. It contained but a single lucifer, and this he struck, after having picked up a bit of tarred rope with which to make a temporary torch.

The feeble light enabled him to see but little except the boxes and barrels before mentioned. Seeing that the boxes all bore addresses, he looked several of them over.

"Rio de Janeiro!" he ejaculated, and his heart sank. "Great Cæsar! is the ship bound for that distant South American port! Why, it's a two-months' trip!"

At that moment the tarred rope spluttered and went out, leaving him in darkness once more. Utterly discouraged, he sank on a box and gave himself up to his bitter reflections.

Slowly the day wore away, and Paul began to wonder if his captors were going to let him die of hunger and thirst, when the hatch above was hauled aside, a ladder was lowered, and Captain Scully came down, lantern in hand. His dismay at seeing Paul free can easily be imagined.

"How did you get loose?" he demanded, hanging his lantern on a nail driven in a beam overhead.

"I've had plenty of time in which to work it," answered Paul, as calmly as he could. "It's a wonder you wouldn't starve me to death and be done with it."

"It was kind o' rough on you, lad," answered the captain; "but you can have some supper before you turn in. You'll find we are not a bad sort on board of the *White Thrush* when you get to know us."

"Why was I brought on board?"

"Well, in the first place, I was short of a hand and didn't have time to ship a man in the regular way; in the second place, because your intimate friend, Mike Hooney, requested it."

"It was a plot between you and this Hooney, I suppose. How long do you expect to keep me on board?"

"To the end of the voyage."

"Until you get to Rio de Janeiro?"

"You've hit it first guess."

"Supposing I won't stay?"

"You'll have to stay. We are on the ocean, almost out of sight of land, and I don't think you'll risk jumping overboard and swimming ashore."

"You had no right to 'shanghai' me in this fashion."

"We won't argue that point, lad." Captain Scully's face grew stern. "What I want to know is, now you are on board and shipped for the trip, do you intend to behave yourself or not?"

"That depends on what you call behaving yourself. I'm not going to pound my head against a stone wall just for the fun of it."

"I see you have some sense about you. Now let me speak plainly. You can come on deck and I'll introduce you to the crew. Duff, the boat-swain, will take you in hand, and if you don't get seasick, I reckon you'll pick up a good bit in a week, as much as some of them lubbering Swedes pick up in a lifetime. So long as you behave yourself and do your duty I'll treat you well, and at the end of the trip I'll pay you off, same as the rest."

"And after that?"

"After that you can ship again or not, just as you please," answered Captain Scully, but there was a peculiar glitter in his black eyes, for part of his agreement with Mike Hooney had been that Paul should be given no opportunity to come back to the United States.

Paul was silent for a moment, and during that silence he thought rapidly. He had no intention of sailing to Rio de Janeiro if it could be avoided. But there would be no use in angering Captain

Scully by saying so. By playing the part of one subdued and satisfied, it was likely he would fare much better.

"Well, you'll have to give me something to eat and drink soon," he said. "If you don't you'll have a sick hand on the ship's log."

"You can have supper at once," answered Captain Scully, delighted to think the youth had been so easily subdued. "Nothing like letting 'em get hungry to bring 'em to terms," he muttered to himself.

He led the way up the ladder, and Paul followed. The sun had set and the air on deck was damp and cold. Duff stood close at hand, and the captain turned Paul over to the sailor.

The food offered the boy was coarser than he had ever eaten, even at Hiram Dunkirk's place, yet, with such an appetite, nothing had ever tasted better. He ate up every mouthful set before him, then followed Duff into the fore-castle.

"There's some old sea clo's," said the sailor, pointing to a pile of tar-stained garments lying on a chest. "Better wear them and put yer good clo's away fer the present."

The clothing made Paul feel sick again. They were more than dirty—they were filthy, and he turned away.

"I'll wear what I've got," he answered. "Where am I to sleep?"

“Over in the upper bunk in the corner. But you can’t turn in just yet. Come on deck and I’ll show ye some of the ropes. Did ye ever climb a mast?”

“No.”

“Better learn fust thing then. It’s better to learn in calm weather than to have to make a break during a storm. Now then, up ye go. It’s easy enough, and you won’t git giddy if yer don’t look down.”

Up the ratlines on one side of the mast went Paul, and came down on the side opposite. An hour’s instructions in handling sails followed, and Paul learned readily, although his thoughts were far away. Life on the *White Thrush* did not strike him as favorable, and he wondered how soon an opportunity to leave would present itself.

When the time came he started to turn in with several sailors. But the air in the forecastle was foul to the last degree; the bunk assigned to him he found inhabited by innumerable bugs and roaches, and at last he had to seek the deck to keep his stomach from revolting.

Two weeks passed by, and still the ship kept on her southerly course. One night Paul came up to find a storm brewing.

“We’re in fer a reg’lar southwest storm,” he heard one of the sailors remark. “To my way

o' thinkin', the cap'n better take in a few reefs all around."

"Where do you calculate we are?" asked Paul drawing closer.

"We're off the Cuban coast," answered the tar. "It's a good thing we aint sailin' under no American nor Spanish flag, or we might have trouble." For the *White Thrush* flew the flag of England.

Cuba! Paul had often heard of that famous island since the war with Spain had started. If he could only swim to the shore! But the idea was not worth considering, for the schooner was all of three miles out.

The wind began to rise, and presently word was sent down to the cabin, where Captain Scully and his first mate were indulging in a bottle of liquor and some strong cigars. The captain came on deck, much the worse for the potions he had consumed.

"Lively there!" he yelled. "Lively, boys! Confound it! are ye all gone to sleep? Up on deck and take in the mainsail! We're in for a blow, an' no mistake."

Then his eyes fell upon Paul, who stood still, not knowing what to do.

"You lubber, get to work or I'll rope-end you! Up there, now, to the masthead. Duff, take him up with you."

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered Duff. "Come," he added to Paul, "up you go. It's good you know the trick. No time to waste, either!"

The last words were uttered as a heavy blast struck the *White Thrush*, sending the schooner well over on her side. Up into the rigging flew the sailors, and Paul started to follow. But before the ratlines were gained Captain Scully was after him with a rope's end.

"That to make you hurry!" he snapped, and struck the youth across the shoulders.

The blow cut into Paul's very soul. It was bad enough to be kidnapped without being abused afterward. He whirled around and whipped the rope's end from the captain's hand.

"You brute!" he cried, and let the captain have the stinging lash full in the face. "There's another for you, and another! and another!" and down came the rope's end again and again, until, with yells of pain, Captain Scully began to retreat. Paul was on the point of following him up when, with a wild shriek, the wind again struck the *White Thrush*, throwing her almost on her beam end, and in a twinkling the boy was hurled overboard into the seething sea.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HIRAM DUNKIRK IS MYSTIFIED.

“ So he’s gone, an’ dat reward is mine.”

It was Mike Hooney who spoke. He was taking it easy in the sitting room of the Dunkirk homestead, a black-looking cigar stuck between his yellow teeth and the air about him filled with vile-smelling smoke.

“ You are certain the *White Thrush* sailed off with him?” said Hiram Dunkirk nervously. “ There was no chance for him to escape?”

“ Not der least bit. Captain Scully said he wouldn’t leave der rat out of de hold until de ship was a mile or more out on de ocean.”

“ And the ship was bound for Rio de Janeiro?” went on Paul’s guardian slowly. “ Won’t she make any stop before she gets there?”

“ No.”

“ But Paul may come back, even from Rio de Janeiro. He is a smart lad, in his way.”

“ De captain will attend ter dat,” and Hooney shook his head decidedly and blew out such a volume of smoke it made Hiram Dunkirk sick, for he did not smoke himself—not because he did

not wish to, but because he had always been too mean to buy either cigars or tobacco.

Hiram Dunkirk began to walk up and down nervously.

"So yer see de reward is mine," went on Hooney, after a pause.

"Let me see, how much did I promise you? Fifty dollars, wasn't it?"

"Wot? Not much! It was three hundred, old man."

"No! no!"

"I say it was, an' yer can't cheat me, see?" growled Mike Hooney angrily. "Fork over de cash."

Hiram Dunkirk gave a half-audible groan.

"I'll give you a hundred dollars; that is more than the job is worth."

Mike Hooney's eyes began to blaze.

"So dat's de way yer goin' ter try ter t'row me over, is it?" he demanded, sticking his repulsive chin into Dunkirk's face. "Well, I'll tell yer flat, it won't work—see? It won't work!"

"I'll give you a hundred dollars, that's all," answered Paul's guardian firmly.

Hooney drew a long breath. Then he suddenly changed his tactics.

"It aint fair, but I'll take it," he answered briefly.

In a few minutes the money was paid over.

The tough counted it carefully, noted that the bills were genuine, and stuck them into his vest pocket.

"Do yer know where I'm goin' now?" he asked, as he stepped toward the door.

"Back to New York, I presume," said Dunkirk. "And I hope you'll—er—forget all about this little transaction."

"Furgit nothin ! I played yer fair, an' now you're throwin' me over. Yer promised me t'ree hundred dollars, an' yer paid me one hundred. I'm goin' down to de county seat an' give yer dead away, dat's where I'm goin'."

At these words Hiram Dunkirk nearly fainted. He clutched at the table and then at Mike Hooney's arm.

"You—you—scoundrel ! How dare you ? And with my hard-saved money in your pocket !" he gasped.

"Your money ? Dat boy's money, yer mean. Yes, I'm goin' to de county seat and tell everyt'ing."

"You'll only get arrested for it."

"Fer wot ? Fer overhearin' a deal you made wid a man I didn't know ter git de boy out of de way ? Dat boy will never come back, I tell yer, so who is to say dat my yarn aint true ? While everybody knows—or dey will know—why you wanted to git rid of Graham."

"You're a—a fiend!" murmured Hiram Dunkirk; and now every particle of color had left his face.

"No, I aint. I want yer ter play fair, dat's all. Fork over de balance of dat money an' yer will find me all right."

Hiram Dunkirk grated his teeth. He threatened, argued, and coaxed, all to no purpose. Hooney remained firm, and in the end the two rascals drove off to Tipton and to the bank, where Dunkirk drew some additional cash and made good his first promise.

"I don't want you any more at present," he said to Hooney, on parting at the depot. "But leave me your address, and if anything turns up I'll write you." And Hooney left his address.

Four hours later Hooney was in Boston, among his old friends, squandering the money so vigorously that the three hundred dollars squeezed out of Hiram Dunkirk lasted less than a week. But Hooney did not care for this.

"I've got a hold on de old man," he muttered. "He can't shake me, an' I'll make him give me more whenever I want it."

Before paying over the extra money Hiram Dunkirk had obtained a New York newspaper at the railroad depot, and on one of the pages had read a brief account to the effect that Paul Graham, of Powell's Golden Cornet Band, was miss-

ing and his friends were looking for him everywhere.

The train with Hooney gone, Dunkirk stuffed the paper in his pocket and walked over to the county courthouse.

He had to record a deed for a strip of land bought from Joel Burgess, and this work took him the best part of an hour.

While he was awaiting around he ran across the surrogate, a man named Pepperill Wilder, who knew Dunkirk well.

"Hullo, Dunkirk!" said Wilder, shaking hands, and an all-round conversation took place.

"By the way, Dunkirk, I had a lawyer from Boston up here a few days ago, looking over Maurice Graham's will," said the surrogate presently.

"You did?" returned Paul's guardian, completely staggered. "Who was he?"

"Gave his name as Clinton Fairfield."

"What did he want of the will?"

"I don't know. He took a copy of it, and then asked me if I knew anything about the quarry company's affairs. After that he went into the county clerk's office."

Of course Hiram Dunkirk was more than interested—he was decidedly troubled. Returning to the county clerk's office, he asked the clerk con-

cerning the mysterious Clinton Fairfield's business.

"He copied off a lot of records concerning the quarry company's transfers," replied the county clerk. "I can't tell you exactly what, for I was very busy."

"Where did he go after he left here?"

"Took the stage up to Stoneville."

"Humph!"

Hiram Dunkirk said no more. But instead of returning home, he waited for the stage to come in, and then questioned the driver concerning Clinton Fairfield.

"I took him to Eliza Dunwell's cottage," said the driver. "I remember him well, for he was the only stranger aboard, and asked particularly about Eliza and how long she had lived here."

At this news Hiram felt more sick than ever. Eliza Dunwell was an old negro woman who had worked for the Dunkirks at the time Mr. Graham died, when Hiram Dunkirk became Paul's guardian. The negro woman knew much concerning the past, but, as the Dunkirks had taken particular pains to treat her well in her old age, she had never as yet opened her mouth about what information she possessed.

Having gained this information, Hiram Dunkirk lost no time in driving back to Stoneville, and then to the little cottage the negro woman

called her home. Ascending the half-tumbled-down porch, he rapped sharply at the door.

No answer was vouchsafed, and he walked around to the rear. Finally, growing impatient, he raised a window and entered the house.

"Eliza! Eliza Dunwell!" he called out, but no answer came back. He walked out and down to a bit of a barn in the rear.

"Hi, Mr. Dunkirk, looking for Eliza?" It was a voice from a neighboring field.

"Yes, Silox. Where is she?"

"Gone tew Boston with a lawyer ez come fer her," answered the farmer addressed.

"To Boston!"

"Exactly. The lawyer got her tew trick out in her very best, and she left word she mightn't be back fer a week or more."

Hiram Dunkirk gave an inward groan. What did it all mean? Was some secret enemy at work, or had Paul started an investigation previous to his disappearance?

"I'll have to watch matters closer than ever," he muttered, as he drove homeward. "I've worked too hard to get this fortune to let it slide out of my grip, more especially now when Paul is out of the way for good."

"Wot's a-troublin' you, Hiram?" asked Mrs. Dunkirk, when he came in.

"A heap," he answered sourly. "Some law-

yer is investigating Maurice Graham's will and the Quarry Company's affairs."

"Well, they can't tech you, can they?"

"Don't know as they can, but they have carted old Eliza off, and are going to pump her, I expect," and Hiram Dunkirk shook his head dubiously.

"They can't get anything out of her now. She's too old."

"They may get more than I want 'em to. I made a mistake, Margy, when I didn't send Eliza away back in the country, with them Pirkens, or somebody else," sighed Hiram Dunkirk. "Then they couldn't find her, nohow."

Hiram Dunkirk passed several uncomfortable days thinking matters over. Every time a man or a wagon came near the place he would start, fearing a visit from the mysterious Clinton Fairfield, who was, as the reader has probably imagined, the lawyer friend Horace Browler had mentioned to Paul.

But as day after day went by, and nothing developed, his reassurance asserted itself, and he reached the conclusion that the investigation had failed of its object.

"Perhaps nothing will be done until Paul turns up," he thought. "And as the boy is gone for good, I am safe."

CHAPTER XXV.

BOUND FOR CUBA.

“MAN overboard!”

“It’s only that boy!” yelled Captain Scully.
“The Old Nick take him! let him drown!”

Such were the brief words uttered when Paul was swept overboard.

The lad did not hear them. The movement came so quickly that he had no time to save himself. For one minute he was in the air; the next sousing down, down into the brine of the mighty ocean.

When he came to the surface of the rolling waters all was darkness around him. Far ahead he saw the lights of the *White Thrush* rapidly disappearing from view. In less than two minutes they were gone.

The cold water chilled him, and he shivered from head to foot. He was alone on the dreary waste of the mighty Atlantic. He must give himself up for lost.

Something still remained in his right hand. It was the rope’s end. With a kind of grim satisfaction he flung it from him.

“Even if I have to die, I’ll be glad I gave that brute something of what he deserves,” was the thought which flashed through his mind.

Presently, as he bobbed up and down on the ocean swells, he discovered far to the southward a number of flashing lights. That they belonged to some lighthouse he felt certain, but this gave him small satisfaction.

“I can’t swim the distance,” he muttered, “and I can’t float until daylight unless I can find something to float on. Oh! if I only had a life-preserver, or a plank, or something!”

The situation was serious, and presently Paul grew very sober. Was he to die there, alone, under that murky sky, now occasionally lit up by far-away flashes of lightning? Was this to be the miserable end of all?

“While there is life there is hope,” he said half aloud, but the whistling wind made the words seem a mockery.

Ten minutes passed. To the youth they appeared so many hours. He was growing benumbed and his teeth were chattering. He felt he could not hold out much longer.

What was that? He raised himself up with a start. It was—no, it wasn’t—yes, it was—a light! A light, and coming toward him! He gave a mad shout.

An instant after a flash of lightning revealed

the outline of a small steam tug, headed directly for the spot where he floated. She was coming on steadily. She might even strike him and carry him under.

“Help! help! help!”

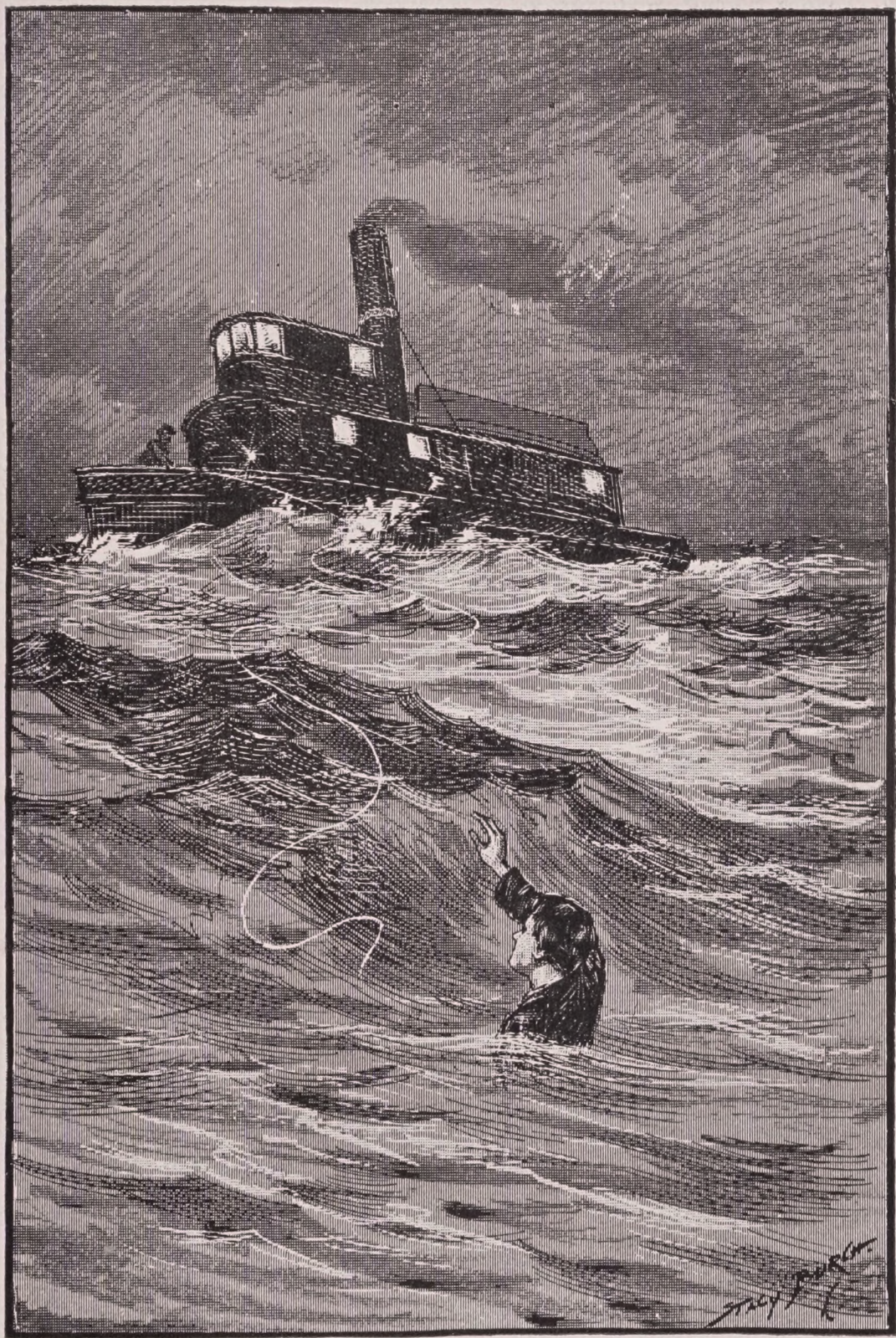
Never had he yelled louder, and the call was repeated over and over until he was actually out of breath. The little tug kept coming closer, and at last his cry was heard.

“It’s somebody in the water!” came to Paul’s ears, as the craft swept dangerously close. Then, as a life-line came whizzing toward him, he clutched it as a drowning man clutches a straw. The speed of the little raft was slackened, and, more dead than alive, he was hauled on board.

“A boy!” cried a military man who seemed to be in charge. “You’re lucky, lad, to have us come along as we did.”

Noting Paul’s condition, he ran the lad directly into the galley and had the cook stir up the fire and make a pot of hot coffee. The storm was now at its height, and for three hours no one came to disturb the worn-out castaway.

When finally the captain of the tug did appear, he was almost as tired as Paul, for the storm had been a wild one, and more than once the wind had threatened to cast him up on the shore beyond. But now the wind had grown more



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steady, and the *Arrow*, which was the name of the tug, was running out to sea.

Captain Dunforth listened to Paul's story with interest.

"Runs like a romance," he smiled. "But I believe you, for such things have happened before. It's lucky we chanced along as we did."

"This doesn't look like an ordinary steam tug," remarked Paul. "You appear to have several soldiers on board."

At this Captain Dunforth smiled.

"This vessel belongs to the United States Navy," he answered. "The soldiers you see are government officers."

"And where are you bound?"

"You will have to ask Lieutenant Carwell that question. The *Arrow* is on a secret mission and I am not allowed to answer questions."

"If that's the case I'll wager you are bound for Cuba!" cried the young bandmaster. "I know we were close to the Cuban shore when I was picked up."

At this moment Lieutenant Carwell appeared. He was a tall, handsome man and had a kindly face. He listened to all Paul had to say with close attention.

"Yes, there is no need for further secrecy," he said. "We are bound for Cuba on a government mission." What it was he did not add, but later

on Paul discovered that it was to arrange with certain Cuban insurgents to co-operate with the American army of invasion when it should arrive.

The officers on the tug numbered six, and soon Paul was introduced to them. The youth listened eagerly to all that they had to tell about what was going on in the army and navy.

"We are sending out a large army from Key West," said one of the officers. "General Shafter will have at least sixteen thousand men."

"They will need a good many ships," said Paul.

"He will have over thirty transports."

"And where will they land, at Havana?"

"No, near Santiago, where we have Admiral Cervera bottled up in the harbor. Take my word for it, all of the fighting in Cuba will be done in and around Santiago."

"I'd like to be in it," said Paul, with a smile. "I've wanted to join the army right along, but my professional engagement kept me back."

"You may be right in it even so," put in another officer. "Now you are with us I don't see but what you will have to remain."

This put a new light on the matter, and Paul at once began to question Captain Dunforth and Lieutenant Carwell about the prospects.

"I don't see anything to do but to take you along," said the military man. "Our secret mis-

sion will render it necessary for us to keep away from all other vessels excepting such as belong to our navy. Of course you needn't land with us unless you wish to do so. Captain Dunforth will remain on the *Arrow* with his crew and you can stay on board until we are ready to go back to the United States."

"No, if I must go to Cuba I want to do my duty at the front," said Paul quickly. "But I wish I could send word to my friends that I am safe," he added.

"You shall send word as soon as it can be arranged."

The *Arrow* was running along the eastern coast of Cuba. Soon they passed Cape Maisi and then they turned westward toward Guantanamo Bay, which is but a few miles from Santiago.

During the next day they stood well out to sea, but as night settled down, they turned again for the Cuban coast. As they drew nearer, Lieutenant Carwell watched eagerly, glass in hand.

"There they are!" he cried suddenly, and looking in the direction, Paul saw several lights flash up. They showed themselves six times, then went out, to reappear five minutes later.

"It's a signal from the Cubans," explained a sailor to the young bandmaster. "I reckon we'll run in now."

The tar was right. The *Arrow* was headed directly for the point where the lights had appeared, and soon the tug was as close to the rocky shore as the surf permitted. Then a small boat was lowered and Lieutenant Carwell and two others left the *Arrow*.

The officers were gone the best part of three hours. When they returned the face of the lieutenant was wreathed in smiles.

"We've played the Spaniards a neat trick," he said. "I hope the transports arrive to-morrow."

"What about going ashore?" asked Paul.

"You can't do that now, for we must steam to meet General Shafter and his army."

Soon the *Arrow* was plowing through the sea at full speed, leaving a long line of white foam in her wake. As there was nothing to do, Paul went to bed and slept soundly.

A shrill cry, answered by a steam whistle, aroused him at dawn. Rushing on deck he was amazed to see a perfect flotilla of vessels gathered around the steam tug. They were the transports carrying the army of invasion and the war vessels sent along as a guard.

"What a grand sight!" burst from his lips, and then, as the sounds of music from a military band broke upon his ears, he clapped his hands. "That's what I wanted to hear!" he cried. "Oh, how I would like to join that band!"

“I’ll land you on that ship if you wish,” said Lieutenant Carwell, and so it was arranged, and soon Paul found himself among the members of one of Uncle Sam’s leading brass bands, bound for Cuba with the army of invasion, to assist in the attack on Santiago.

The musicians soon learned what a player the boy was, and as one of the B-flat cornet players had been taken sick with fever, the man’s instrument was turned over to Paul, along with a military uniform, and he was told to come along and do his best.

“And I will do my best,” he said. “Hurrah for Uncle Sam and the Flag of Freedom!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

FIGHTING FOR THE FLAG OF FREEDOM.

It is not my intention to tell all of what happened in a military and naval way in and about Santiago during our war with Spain. A good portion of this has already been told in "When Santiago Fell," and "A Sailor Boy with Dewey," two previous volumes of this series. Suffice it to say that the war was now on in earnest. The Spanish warships under Admiral Cervera were "bottled up" in Santiago harbor by the American warships under Rear Admiral Sampson, and the army of invasion intended to land as speedily as possible, to attack the City of Santiago from the east, or land side.

The landing of the troops took some time, and as the water was rough and the landing places poor, many a soldier tumbled into the water. Inside of two days Paul found himself in camp with the other musicians composing the band. He had indeed caught the war fever and cried "On to Santiago!" as loudly as the rest.

General Shafter was pushing his men forward with all speed, and to cheer them up the band

played as frequently as possible. There was one air in particular, "A Hot Time in the Old Town To-night," which seemed to have just the right marching swing to it, and this the soldiers demanded over and over again.

"We are in for it to-morrow, Graham," said Oscar Blake, one of the cornet players, one evening. "General Lawton is going to assault El Caney, while the rest of the army is to attack San Juan Hill. It will be a big fight."

"I'm not afraid," cried Paul. "I must say I would just as lief shoulder a gun and go to the front."

"You're a plucky one," laughed the leader of the band. "Well, maybe you get some fighting before you are through."

The camp was astir at daybreak, and soon the band was on the march, playing as never before. The road was rough and marching was difficult, but nobody minded that. The one thought of all was to get at the Spaniards and whip them thoroughly.

Boom! boom! boom! From a distance came the dull sound of a battery opening in the vicinity of El Caney, and boom! boom! boom! came the sound back from San Juan Hill and the Spanish intrenchments. Then followed a sharp rattle of musketry, and, looking to the left of the band, Paul saw several soldiers suddenly throw up their

hands and fall to the ground, either dead or badly wounded.

The sight made his heart jump. This was war at close quarters. There was no backing out now. He braced himself bravely and blew more loudly than ever on his cornet.

"Give 'em the 'Star-Spangled Banner'!" cried the band leader, and with a crash the glorious old tune burst forth and hundreds of soldiers took up the words, singing and shouting at the top of their lungs. Then came a mighty rush up a hill, and the band found itself almost deserted.

"Can I go?" asked Paul, and the leader of the band nodded. A dead soldier was lying close at hand, and the youth quickly appropriated his gun and cartridge belt and made after the advancing column. The bullets were whistling in all directions, but Paul did not seem to be conscious of them.

"Good for you!" shouted a young American lad as he came running up to Paul. "I am with you; come on!" And he went up the hill side by side with Paul. It was Mark Carter, who has told his own story of this fight in "When Santiago Fell," as old readers of that book already know.

"We'll need every gun we can get, I reckon," panted Paul, and then, as a bullet grazed his ear he dodged and hurried forward faster than ever.

In another moment the young musician was in the very thickest of the fray. He saw a Spaniard in the act of bayoneting an American officer and promptly hit the fellow over the head with his gun, stretching him senseless. Then another of the enemy fired on him and he fired in return, wounding the Don in the hip.

"On, boys, on, and the hill will soon be ours!" was the rallying cry, and the soldiers went on, and then Paul found himself in a hand-to-hand struggle more blood-curdling than any of which he had ever dreamed. He fired his gun several times, and then felt a sharp pain in the side, and turning discovered a Spanish officer trying to run him through with a long sword.

"Don't!" he screamed, but the Don smiled sarcastically and pushed him harder than ever. Paul was just on the point of giving up when there was the low whine of a passing cannon ball and lo! the Spaniard's head fell from his shoulders and his body dropped where it had stood.

This sight was so awful that for a minute Paul felt ready to faint. "Rough, eh?" said an old regular standing near. "But it saved your bacon, my boy."

"So—so it did," faltered Paul. "Gracious, I never thought war could be so bad!"

On they went again, but now the Spaniards

were getting the worst of it right along, and presently they broke and ran. What a cheer went up from Uncle Sam's boys!

"We've got 'em on the run! The hill is ours!"

"On to Santiago, lads! Down with the Dons!"

These and a hundred other cries rang out. Paul started to advance once more when suddenly he felt a strange pain in the leg, and looking down saw that the blood was streaming from his trowsers. He had been shot just below the knee.

"I can't go on!" he gasped, and fell down. In a twinkling two soldiers had caught him up and were carrying him to the rear. The wound, however, was but a slight one, and as soon as it was properly bandaged the lad felt almost as well as ever.

But El Caney and San Juan were ours, and now there was nothing to do for Paul but to join the band again and cheer up those who were wounded or worn out. The band played far into the night, and that night was one Paul never forgot. He had fought for his country, and victory had perched on the standard of the Red, White, and Blue.

Early in the morning the attack on the Spaniards was renewed, and they were driven into the

city itself. Then followed the defeat of Admiral Cervera on the water. This was a bitter blow to Spain, but more was to follow. The surrender of Santiago was demanded of General Toral, the military governor. At first he hesitated, but at last he gave in; and this campaign of our army became a thing of the past.

As soon as it was definitely known that fighting, in this part of Cuba at least, was at an end, Paul asked to be taken to the United States on one of the war vessels which was about to leave for Key West.

"You can go, Graham," said the leader of the military band. "But I hate to lose you, I can tell you that."

"Thank you, Mr. Barding," replied the youth. "If you ever travel my way be sure and hunt the Golden Cornet Band up."

"I certainly shall!" laughed the band leader. "And I shall expect free tickets to the performance, too," he added lightly.

The warship bound for Key West sailed the next morning with Paul as a passenger. The trip to Florida took less than three days. As soon as Key West was gained Paul telegraphed to Anderson Powell, Thompson, and to Calliwax that he was all right and would rejoin the traveling organization at the first opportunity. This was the first the others had heard from Paul since

his disappearance, and it eased their minds greatly, for they had feared that the young bandmaster was dead. During Paul's absence Powell had once more taken charge of the band.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BACK TO THE STATES AGAIN.

"PAUL, what does this mean? What did your enemies and the Spaniards do to you?"

It was Anderson Powell who asked the question, as he wrung the lad's hand warmly. He had been in a fever of anxiety since Paul's disappearance, and the telegram had aroused his curiosity to its highest pitch.

"I'll tell you when the performance is over, to-night, Mr. Powell," answered the youth. "It's about time for the third number on the programme, isn't it?"

"My gracious! Do you want to go on? You look rather pale."

"I'm all right; try me and see," said Paul confidently.

And right he was, as the applause received that night testified. Never had he played with greater skill or sweetness.

"He is a marvel," murmured the old bandmaster. "Some day he will be world-renowned."

On the way to the boarding house Paul told his tale, to which not only Powell, but also Horatio

Calliwax, listened with keen interest. Both shook their heads in perplexity over Hooney's doings.

"It doesn't seem as if that tough would go to all the trouble he did just to get square with you," said Calliwax.

"Perhaps he was paid by this Captain Scully for furnishing another ship's hand," suggested the bandmaster.

"I wish I could lay hands on Hooney, that's all," said Paul. "I'll give him a good thrashing first and have him arrested afterward."

Mr. Browler also listened to the tale with a grave look on his face.

"We must find that scoundrel Hooney," he said, but, although the police were notified and a strict search was made everywhere, Mike Hooney remained undiscovered. And this was not strange, for Hooney, thinking Paul effectually disposed of, had, after a jolly outing at Coney Island and Asbury Park, left New York to pay Stoneville and Hiram Dunkirk another visit.

The two weeks in New York and several weeks in Brooklyn and other nearby cities had paid very well, while the puffs received in the various metropolitan papers made both Thompson and Anderson Powell feel certain that an equally lucrative business would be done Down East.

From New York State the company went to Portland and Boston, and then to Springfield, Massachusetts. Winter was now again at hand and it was very cold.

"I'm getting near home once more," said Paul. "For two pins I would take a train down into the neighborhood and see what Hiram Dunkirk is doing. I wonder if he has been keeping track of me?"

"Have you heard anything from that New York lawyer lately?" asked Calliwax.

"He sent me a letter last week. He is not well and has left the case to Fairfield, the Boston lawyer. Nothing new has turned up. I wish I would hear from Barrett Radley."

"Well, it takes some time for a letter to go to Africa and for another to come back."

"I suppose so. But if I had the time I would call on Hiram Dunkirk just for fun," concluded the young bandmaster.

Nothing more was said of the matter for several days. Then Thompson announced a lay-off until the following Monday.

"I can't make a good date anywhere," he explained, "and I don't know but that a few days' rest will do all hands some good."

"That settles it, then," said Paul. "I'm going to Stoneville to see how matters look."

"Want me to go along?" asked Calliwax.

"You may need a friend, in case Dunkirk tries any of his underhanded work."

"I fancy I can take care of myself now," smiled Paul. "I'm not the poor boy I was once. I am rich, not only in money, but in friends as well. But come along, Calliwax, if you have nothing better to do."

So the two set out. A train for Tipton was soon found, and late in the afternoon Paul and Calliwax were treading the familiar highways of Stoneville.

The youth met a number of people he knew, and these stared at him in an odd way.

"Thought you had run away fer good!" cried Joel Burgess, on catching sight of him. "Reckon yer runnin' away didn't set well—although I allow ez how you're wearin' mighty fine clothes."

"I am doing very well, thank you," said Paul, hurrying on to avoid being questioned further. Stoneville was a sleepy place, and the news of the young bandmaster's luck had not yet reached there.

"I wonder how he is really doin'?" soliloquized the cooper, scratching his head. "Hang me ef I don't think he's rather smart, after all. Won't Hiram be surprised when he walks in!"

"That's the barrel maker Mr. Dunkirk was going to bind me out to," explained Paul to his friend. "If I had stayed I suppose I would be

earning two or three dollars per week making barrels by this time."

"Instead of making barrels of money," laughed Calliwax. "Say, living in a town like this would grow moss all over me in a month. If I—what's the matter?"

For Paul had clutched Calliwax by the arm and was drawing him back into the shelter of a nearby tree.

"Look! look! Don't you see that man coming up the side road?"

"Yes; is it Dunkirk?"

"No, no! it's Mike Hooney, the fellow who robbed me and the one who had me shanghaied on board of the *White Thrush*."

"Is it possible! What can he be doing here?"

"That is what I want to know. There he goes, up the road to Hiram Dunkirk's house. Can it be possible he is going there? Let us follow him and find out."

And off they struck after the rascal, never dreaming of the important revelations so close at hand.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HIRAM TURNS THE TABLES.

"HE is bound for Dunkirk's, sure!" cried Paul to Horatio Calliwax, as the shuffling form of Mike Hooney was seen to turn into the well-known lane.

The snow lay thick upon the front piazza of the Dunkirk cottage, and Hooney had to go slow for fear of falling. A pounding on the door brought Margy Dunkirk to the scene.

"What! you here again!" Paul heard her exclaim. "Didn't Mr. Dunkirk tell you never to show your nose on the premises again?"

"Never you mind, old lady," ejaculated Hooney harshly. "I'm out of cash, and I'm bound to have a few dollars or know the reason why."

"You shan't have a cent more out of my husband," cried Mrs. Dunkirk. "He has paid you more now than you deserve."

"Hullo! this is getting interesting," whispered Paul to Calliwax, during the pause that followed. "Evidently Hooney has been here before."

Hiram Dunkirk now came forth from the house, a sour look on his evil-looking face.

"You get right out of here!" he said sternly to Hooney. "Get, before I turn the dog onto you."

"I want ten dollars," answered Hooney stubbornly.

"Not a cent of money shall you have."

"Thet's right, Hiram, don't give him a penny," put in Mrs. Dunkirk.

"If you won't let me have ten dollars, make it five," went on Hooney, growing alarmed over the reception he was receiving.

This was his fifth visit to the Dunkirk homestead.

Of his first two visits the reader already knows. The third and fourth trips had been for additional cash, and in his fright Hiram Dunkirk had handed over first, fifty dollars, and then twenty-five.

When he had given the latter amount Mike Hooney had solemnly sworn to bother him no more. And that was less than two weeks past.

"I've been in bad luck," whined Hooney. "I slipped and twisted my ankle. Give me five dollars and I'll beat my way somehow to New York, and you won't see nuthin' of me ag'in."

Hiram Dunkirk shook his head.

"I have nothing for a tramp like you, so walk along."

He tried to close the front door, but Hooney put out his foot and held it back.

"You won't give me even a five?"

"No."

"If yer don't, yer know the consequences," and the rascal's eyes snapped, for defeat did not set well with him.

"You can do as you please," returned Hiram Dunkirk. "If you go to law, I'll swear I never saw you before, and that you are trying to blackmail me. Now go. Margy, call the dog."

"Blackmail you!" howled Hooney. For the moment he was staggered. "You're a nice one ter talk of dat, you are! Say, if yer won't hand over de money, let me whisper somethin' in yer ear."

"I want to hear nothing more out of you."

"I want ter tell yer somet'in about dat boy."

"I won't listen. Git, or I'll put the dog onto you."

"Dat boy aint dead!" burst out Hooney wickedly. "He's as alive an' well as you or me. How do yer like dat news?"

"I knew it long ago," was Hiram Dunkirk's quiet answer.

Mike Hooney staggered back, and his lower jaw dropped.

"Yer 'did?" he gasped.

"Yes. Now clear out. If you ever come near me again, I'll have you locked up for a tramp and a thief."

"But you——"

Mike Hooney was not allowed to finish. Margy Dunkirk had gone for her favorite weapon, a broom. Now she rushed forward, and thrust the whisks directly into the rascal's dirty face. He staggered back, slipped in the snow and rolled off the piazza, down the steps and into the dooryard. Before he could recover the door was shut and bolted from the inside.

Paul had listened to the foregoing conversation with a lively interest. It was clear that Hooney and Dunkirk had something in common. He looked at Calliwax.

"What do you think of this?"

"Follow the fellow and stop him as soon as he is out of sight of the house," said Horatio Calliwax.

Muttering imprecations not fit to print, Mike Hooney arose slowly to his feet. Then, after shaking his fist at the dwelling, he turned and shuffled off in the direction from which he had come.

Paul and Calliwax had been hiding behind an evergreen hedge. Along this they followed Hooney until a turn in the road was gained.

Then both sprang into the open and confronted the rascal.

"Hooney, stop! I want to talk to you," commanded Paul, and caught the tough by the arm.

"You!" murmured the rascal under his breath. For the moment he was too surprised to say more.

"What are you doing up here, Hooney?" went on Paul.

"Me?" stammered the tough.

"Yes, you."

"Nuthin'."

"Don't lie to me. You just called on Hiram Dunkirk. What for?"

"Aint been a-a-callin' on nobody. Let me go!" and Hooney tried to pass on.

But Paul held him fast.

"Not so slick, you rascal. Do you imagine I have forgotten how you had me shanghaied on board of the *White Thrush*? Not much!"

"I don't know yer—so dare. Lemme go!"

"All right, come on," replied Paul coolly.

"Calliwax, will you take his other arm?"

"Wot—wot yer goin' ter do wid me?"

"Have you arrested."

"Yer can't prove a t'ing against me?"

"Perhaps I can."

"Yer can't—not a t'ing."

"Perhaps you don't know how I managed to

leave the schooner and what has become of Captain Scully?" said Paul suggestively.

As he had calculated, this had its proper effect upon the tough, who turned suddenly pale.

"Is de—de cap'n in jail?" he gasped.

"Never mind that now. I want you to answer my question."

"It wasn't me dat had yer takin' on de boat," burst out Hooney. "Dat was dis Hiram Dunkirk's work."

"Dunkirk!"

"Exactly. He was workin' ter git rid of yer. Say, if yer won't do nuthin' ag'in me, I'll show up de hull push, see?"

"I'll see about it, Hooney. Now tell me your story."

A long conversation followed, and then, in the shelter of a cluster of pine trees, the tough made a complete confession, telling how he had found the letter addressed to Barrett Radley, and how he had brought it to Hiram Dunkirk, and been hired to get our hero out of the way for good.

"Dat man is cheatin' yer out of a lot o' property," concluded Hooney. "Yer want ter jump on him, dat's wot!"

Now, that he had confessed, and knowing he could expect nothing more from Dunkirk, Hooney was anxious to help Paul all he could,

not only to save himself, but also in hopes of a possible reward.

To the young bandmaster the idea of aid from this tough was decidedly repulsive, but Calliwax saw the advantages of keeping Hooney on their side of the game, at least for the present, and winked to Paul to that effect.

"All right, Hooney; you help us now, and we'll talk about your position in this affair later," said Paul.

Not far away lived an old man who had always been more or less friendly to Paul, and thither the three made their way; shelter was obtained for Calliwax and the tough, while Paul set out once more for Hiram Dunkirk's farm.

The distance was quickly covered, and, ascending the piazza, Paul knocked loudly on the door. His heart beat quickly as he waited.

At last came a voice from within.

"Who is there?" It was Hiram Dunkirk, and he was afraid Hooney had returned.

"It is I—Paul Graham."

"Paul!" burst from Dunkirk's lips, and a rattling of the lock followed. Then the door was opened, and the young bandmaster stepped into the well-known hallway.

"So you thought you would come back at last, eh?" remarked Dunkirk sourly. "You've taken your time about it, 'pears to me."

"Yes, I have taken my time about it."

"Come into the sitting room—I'm not going to freeze to death talking to you out in this cold hall."

The pair were soon in the apartment mentioned. Here a little blaze of wood had been started in the old sheet-iron stove, and it was consequently warmer.

"I reckon you've come back to stay," went on Hiram Dunkirk, after an awkward pause.

"Hardly, Mr. Dunkirk; I came back to get a settlement out of you."

"A settlement?"

"Exactly."

"I can't say as I understand you."

"I will make myself clear, Mr. Dunkirk. Beating about the bush will only waste valuable time. In the first place, I know what you did to get me out of the way." Hiram Dunkirk winced. "In the second place, I know your intentions in regard to my father's estate; in the third place, I demand that you transfer your guardianship to somebody else and hand over every cent that is coming to me. And if you don't accept my proposition, before I'm done with you I'll land you in jail."

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN WHICH AFFAIRS GET MIXED.

AN intense silence followed Paul's words.

The young bandmaster had expected his guardian to flare up, knowing his excitable nature, but for once he was mistaken.

Hiram Dunkirk realized the desperate game he was playing, and he was resolved to keep cool and play as he had never played before.

"Paul, you talk big, but your words don't amount to shucks," he said at last, dropping into a chair by the stove.

"Which means that you won't pay any attention to my demands."

"That's what, boy."

"Then I shall go ahead as I see fit—and you'll go to jail."

"Let us look at it another way, boy. In the first place, you ran away from home—ran away from your lawfully appointed guardian."

"I had good reason to do that."

"In the second place, you stole four hundred and fifty dollars from that desk in the corner."

"That is not true—and you know it."

"I know it is true. Abigail Darrow will help me prove it."

"What—that old woman, whom I saved from the tramps!" burst from Paul's lips. "She knows the tramps had the money."

"She knows nothing of the kind. I have talked with her several times—told her just what you were—and now she is certain my pocketbook dropped from your pocket during the fight that took place in her kitchen."

"If she is, it is only because you have either talked her into it or you have bought her up," answered the young bandmaster bitterly.

Hiram Dunkirk turned slightly pale and cleared his throat before proceeding.

"I shan't notice your slurs—just now," he continued. "In the third place, you have got hold of money somehow—didn't git it by hard work, I'll vow—and you sent a feller over to the county courthouse to look up your father's will, and so on, and even had the feller spirit old Eliza Dunwell away, although I allow I don't know why on earth that was done."

There was a pause.

"And you hired Mike Hooney to have me taken on board of a vessel bound for Rio de Janeiro, in the hope that I would never come back—in fact, it was understood I was never to come back," retorted Paul.

“Another straight, out-and-out lie, boy. Instead of my hirin’ this Hooney, you hired him to git up this story, and he’s been here more’n a dozen times pesterin’ me for money, an’ threatenin’ me if I didn’t give it to him.” Hiram Dunkirk leaped to his feet. “Paul, you may think yourself smart, but you can’t get the best o’ Hiram Dunkirk, understand that. I know jest what I am a-doin’, and you have got to knuckle under, or take the consequences.”

Hiram Dunkirk’s words concerning Hooney were bewildering. Paul, though, soon caught the drift of his guardian’s argument. Dunkirk meant to deny everything, and, if hard pushed, would undertake to prove him a bad boy and a thief.

“Hiram knows jest how slick you be, Paul Graham,” put in Mrs. Dunkirk, as she entered. “But you can’t pull the wool over Hiram’s eyes not so long as I’m here to advise him.”

“Margy, you leave the boy to me—I’ll manage him,” growled the husband, who did not relish this interference.

“Then I understand that you are not willing to come to terms?” said the young bandmaster coldly.

“It depends on what you mean by comin’ to terms. If you want a change of guardian, I don’t know but what I’m willing—if ye can find

anybody foolish enough to take care of you until you are twenty-one."

"He'll have his hands full," grunted Margy, with a sour look at the young bandmaster. "Dreadfully tricked out, aint ye?" The last in reference to Paul's fine clothing.

"I want not only a change of guardian, but I want a full and clear settlement of my father's estate."

"That's easily made. The quarry matters is all settled now, and there's an even three hundred and forty dollars in the bank a-comin' to you."

"Three hundred and forty dollars!"

"Exactly. It's more'n you deserve, but what's comin' to you is comin' to you, an' that's all there is to it."

"Do you imagine for one minute that I will be satisfied with any such accounting as that?" burst out the young bandmaster. "Why, it isn't a tenth part of what my father's estate was worth. You shan't swindle me like that."

Hiram Dunkirk shrugged his shoulders.

"Aint no use fer either of us to fly up, boy. If you want a change, well and good. If you don't——"

"If I don't——"

"You can go off and take care of yourself, or you can come back and go to work for Joel Burgess as I wanted ye to."

At the latter words the young bandmaster could not help but smile. Go to work for the cooper after all that had happened since leaving Stoneville!

"Mr. Dunkirk, what do you think I've been doing since I left you?" he asked.

"I don't think, I know. You've been traveling around with a theater band—a good-fer-nuthin' set, I dare say."

"I've been traveling around with one of the best bands in the country, and I've fought in Cuba, too. At first I was only a cornetist. Now I am a soloist and also a bandmaster. Have you any idea how much I earn per week?"

"Eight or ten dollars, I suppose—when you git it. I've heard tell theater folks don't pay up very promptly."

"I earn sixty dollars a week, and I get paid every Saturday night as regularly as clockwork."

"What!" Hiram Dunkirk's eyes opened like two saucers and he thought he had not heard aright. As for Mrs. Dunkirk, she was nearly overcome.

"Sixty dollars a week!" cried both in chorus.

"Yes."

"It aint so—nobody is a-earnin' that nowadays," continued Hiram Dunkirk.

"You jest said thet to put on airs, Paul Gra-

ham," said Mrs. Dunkirk. "Sixty dollars! More'n likely it's sixty cents!"

"You have not got to believe it if you don't want to."

"But what would they pay that for?"

"For my playing and for the work I do in managing the band. As a soloist I am considered a star performer."

"Well, I never thought you could play much on that horn," sniffed Margy.

"Then it is fortunate for me that the general public and you are of different opinions."

"Don't ye put on airs, Paul Graham!"

"I'm not putting on airs—I am simply stating the truth."

"Then you aint wantin' to come back here?" said Hiram Dunkirk faintly.

"Not much."

"Very well; you can suit yourself. But see here, Paul." A crafty look came into Dunkirk's fishy eyes. "Seein' as how you are doin' so well, why don't you let this guardianship matter drop? I won't bother you, and the money can stay in the bank at interest until you are old enough to draw it out."

"That plan would suit me firstrate, Mr. Dunkirk, if everything was on the level. But it is not. You are cheating me out of thousands and

I am bound to have my rights. If you won't give them to me I'll go to law."

"Go to law; and I'll land ye in jail for stealin' that four hundred and fifty dollars."

"I'll risk it."

"And you'll never git a cent more'n that three hundred and forty dollars out of me—not if you get the best lawyer in the country to try the case. I've looked into the matter closely, and I know just where I stand. If you want to try it, go ahead and do your worst, and see where you come out. And as for that Hooney, I've looked up his record in Boston, and if he dares to show himself on the witness stand he'll go to prison for certain."

CHAPTER XXX.

A MESSAGE FROM AFRICA.

TEN minutes later, Paul had left the house and was on his way to the cottage where Calliwax and Hooney awaited him.

His visit to his guardian had profited him nothing. Dunkirk had defied him to do his worst, and in addition had threatened to have him prosecuted for the theft of the four hundred and fifty dollars.

"One thing is certain," said the young bandmaster, as he took Horatio Calliwax aside and gave him the details. "Hiram Dunkirk has managed to cover up his evil doings thoroughly; otherwise he would never defy me as he has."

"I think it wouldn't be a bad plan to interview that lawyer friend of Horace Browler. Let me see, what was his name?"

"Clinton Fairfield. Yes, I was thinking of that myself. But the trouble is, what is to be done with Hooney?"

This question was a sticker, but Calliwax quickly solved it.

"We'll take him along. He can take his

choice of going willingly or being sent to jail. Here is a pawn ticket for your diamond scarf-pin; Hooney gave it to me."

The tough was told of their plan. At first he demurred about going, but soon agreed, when the jail was mentioned.

"Don't have me locked up an' I'll do anything fer you," he pleaded.

The run to Boston on the train did not take long. Clinton Fairfield was found in his office on Washington Street. Paul asked to see him in private, and quickly introduced himself, while Calliwax kept charge of Hooney in an outer office.

"I am sorry to state, Mr. Graham, that my search was a good deal of a disappointment," were Clinton Fairfield's words. "Your father left a most peculiar will, drawn up, I believe, by Hiram Dunkirk, and signed at a time when your father was hardly conscious of what he was doing. This latter statement comes from the old nurse, Eliza Dunwell."

"And you have found nothing wrong in my guardian's accounts?"

"Speaking by the letter of the law, I have found nothing. But there are a number of transactions concerning the quarry company's affairs I cannot understand. For an explanation of these, both Mr. Browler and myself are awaiting

a letter from Barrett Radley of Cape Town, Africa."

"If only he would write," sighed Paul. "Perhaps he will be able to clear up everything."

"He will—at least I hope so."

"Where is Eliza Dunwell now?"

"She liked it so well here that I kept her—giving her a situation with my mother, who is somewhat of an invalid. She may be useful to us later on."

More talk about the case followed, and Paul related the particulars of his visit to Hiram Dunkirk.

"He is a shrewd fellow," said Clinton Fairfield. "We must be very thorough in what we do, or we will accomplish nothing. I dare say he has taken legal advice as to how he stands."

"I am willing to wait a while longer in hopes of hearing from Barrett Radley," said Paul. "But what to do with this Hooney in the meantime I don't know."

"You want to keep track of him?"

"Certainly."

"It can easily be done by hiring a detective to do the work."

"How much will that cost?"

"It will not be hard work. I can get a good man for twenty-five dollars per week and expenses."

“That will be all right. How soon can you get him?”

“At once.”

“Very well.”

There was a telephone handy and Clinton Fairfield proceeded to use it. When he had finished he turned again to the young bandmaster.

“A man will be here inside of half an hour. Your friend had better take Hooney for a short walk.”

Paul understood, and soon Calliwax and Hooney left, the latter wondering what was up, but asking no questions.

In exactly twenty minutes a stranger calling himself Ernest Rand entered Clinton Fairfield's office.

He speedily introduced himself as a detective, and Paul gave him the particulars of what was desired.

Rand had done this sort of work before, and before he left the office he donned a disguise—that of a typical sport.

“Before night I'll be on the best of terms with Hooney,” he said. “And if he's broke he'll stick to me like glue so long as I am willing to put up a little money now and then for him.”

“If he comes around, you can pump him about Hiram Dunkirk,” said Paul. “But don't expose yourself.”

"To expose myself is not my business," said Rand coolly.

The young bandmaster soon left, and Rand followed him at a safe distance.

It had been arranged that Paul should join Calliwax and then the pair would leave Hooney to shift for himself, after which Rand was to pick up an acquaintanceship with the tough in his own peculiar way.

But at the entrance to the office building Paul met Calliwax in a state of great excitement.

"He slipped me!" were the impersonator's words. "Got away on a street car while there was a jam of people on the corner."

"Pshaw!" Paul's face fell. "Then we've got no use for the detective."

He called to Rand and matters were quickly explained.

"Describe him and I'll see if I can't run him down," said the detective.

The description was quickly forthcoming and Calliwax pointed out the direction Hooney had taken. In less than five minutes Rand was on the trail and out of sight.

Paul drew a long breath.

"Everything seems to be going wrong," he sighed. "I thought I would corner Hiram Dunkirk, and I haven't cornered him at all—instead, he defies me."

"Never mind, it will all come out right in the end," replied Calliwax. "But I was a chump to let Hooney slip me," he added. "A fat lady ran into me and before I could recover and release myself from her embrace he was gone."

As there was nothing else to do for the present, they returned to Springfield. Here they found Thompson running around in a half-wild state.

"By Jove! but I'm glad you turned up!" cried the general manager. "I've got a chance for a good opening at Providence to-morrow night, and I didn't know whether to take it or not, not knowing if either of you would turn up."

"Well, here we are, and you can accept, for I can do nothing else just now," replied Paul.

The company moved to Providence that night and a rehearsal was had in the morning. On account of the short time for preparation, the city was billed heavily, and large advertisements were put into all of the papers.

One new bill made Paul blush when he saw it. It was a life-like representation of himself, with his golden cornet in his hand.

"Gracious me, Thompson! What made you get that?" he asked.

"It's a good advertisement, Paul."

"But look what it says: 'Paul Graham, Leading Boy Cornetist of the World!'"

"The bill tells the truth."

"Nonsense!"

"Thompson is right," put in Calliwax.
"Paul, you are getting famous."

"I fancy Hiram Dunkirk don't think so."

"If I were you I wouldn't bother my head about him any more," said the general manager.

"But I shall. He is cheating me and has tried to make me out a thief. I'll never rest until I've shown him up for the rascal he is."

The theater was crowded and the performance went off with great success. But after it was over Paul called Calliwax aside.

"Calliwax, did you notice him?" he asked.

"Who, the crazy-looking fellow in the left-hand box?"

"Yes."

"Of course I did. Why, he looked at me in a way that made my blood run cold."

"He kept his eyes on me all the while I was playing and seemed to look me through and through." Paul gave a shiver. "I hope he doesn't turn up again. He's enough to give one the nightmare."

At ten o'clock Calliwax and Paul went down to the post-office to see if there was any mail.

A foreign-looking letter at once attracted the young bandmaster's attention. It had traveled from Cape Town to New York, then to Springfield, and from there to Providence.

"The letter from Barrett Radley at last!" he cried, and tore it open. The communication was very brief:

"Yours received regarding Hiram Dunkirk and your father's estate. Yes, I know all about the transaction, for I was also interested in the Stoneville Quarry Company. I write this in great haste, as the mail steamer is about to leave. I sail for New York next week, and you can address me again in care of the Astor House of that city. Will do what I can for the son of my old friend as soon as I get settled.

"BARRETT RADLEY."

"He is coming back to the United States," murmured Paul. "Perhaps he is back already. I will write to the New York address without delay."

And he posted a letter inside of the next hour.

Paul had put up at once at one of the leading hotels, and directly before dinner he found himself alone in his room, sorting over some new music which had been sent to him by Anderson Powell. Presently the bell-boy announced a visitor.

"Mr. Carlo de Wombro."

"Humph, I don't know him," said Paul, "Show him up," and went on with his work.

In a minute more a tall man entered the room, closing the door softly after him. The man held a large roll in his hand. Paul looked up and was dismayed to see it was the wild-faced individual who had occupied the box at the theater the evening before.

"This is Signor Paul Graham, I believe," said the man with a low bow."

"I am Paul Graham," answered the young bandmaster.

"Delighted to see you, sir—a great honor to me, I assure you. I presume you have been looking for me," went on the newcomer earnestly.

"No, I have not."

"Indeed? That is queer. I wrote you six notes; yes, six. I have composed a new opera in sixteen acts, sixteen scenes to each act. In one part the orchestration calls for one hundred cornets in unison; magnificent, eh? I want you to play the cornet part for me."

Paul gazed at the man in horror. The fellow was insane, beyond a doubt. What was to be done? He shivered in spite of himself.

"I can't play for you to-day. Come to-morrow," he said quietly.

At this the madman glared at him. "I'll not come to-morrow. You must play for me to-day." He ran and locked the door and then

drew a long knife. "Play for me at once, or I'll kill you!" he hissed. "Play! play! play! I say!"

And he flourished the knife in the young bandmaster's face!

CHAPTER XXXI.

A WELCOME ARRIVAL.

PAUL GRAHAM now found himself in a decidedly perilous situation.

That this madman before him was highly dangerous there could not be the slightest doubt. There was that in the glare of his eyes which was sufficient to make the blood of anyone run cold.

As the fellow flourished his knife Paul tried to back away, until he found himself cornered.

“Stop, put down that knife, and I will play for you,” said the young bandmaster at last.

At once the face of the madman softened.

“That is better, Signor Graham,” he said, lowering the blade slightly. “You will play the cornet part in my opera for me?”

“Yes—if I can.”

“Oh, you can do anything—I know it. The part is very easy—goes like this—lum-tum, la, la, dum! Here you are.”

He thrust the roll he had brought with him at Paul. The young bandmaster took and opened it. It contained a number of sheets of music paper scrawled over with notes which no more resembled a tune than do the tracks of a hen.

"Fine, aint it?" queried the madman.

"Very good," replied Paul slowly, wondering what he should do next. Then a bright idea struck him. "Let us go to the theater and try the opera."

"What, and have the other musicians steal my ideas!" howled the maniac. "Not much! You play that cornet part here."

"But the hotel folks may object. They don't usually allow cornet playing here."

"They'll have to make an exception in your case. Go on, for after you have played the part I must catch the train for New York to arrange for having my opera produced at the Metropolitan Opera House. It will cost a billion dollars to produce it; think of that!"

And the madman danced around wildly.

Seeing there was no help for it, Paul produced his cornet and set the music sheets up before him. Then another idea came to him. Perhaps a gentle lullaby might soothe the lunatic and cause him to depart in peace.

With the perspiration standing out on his forehead he began to play a sweet old German lullaby, with all the mellowness and tenderness at his command. The madman looked on curiously, his eyes softened, and something like a tear stole down his cheek.

But suddenly the fellow's manner changed, and

he brandished his knife once more, this time so close that he scratched Paul's chin.

"That is not right! You are fooling me and playing something of your own! Beware, or I will kill you!"

Again Paul was chilled to the heart. His effort to soothe the man had failed. What should he do next? If he could only get to the door and summon help!

Again his wits came to his aid.

"The part is very difficult. You try it," he said, and handed out his cornet.

The madman hesitated, then took the cornet and placed it to his lips with one hand while still holding the knife in the other. He gave a wild blast, and as he did so Paul leaped for the door. The key was still in the lock, but as his hand touched it it fell to the floor.

"Come back!" roared the madman, and dropping the cornet, he rushed upon Paul. The knife glittered in the air, but ere it could descend Paul had placed a center table between the fellow and himself. Then he caught up the iron rod of a folding music stand and waved it warningly.

"Come near me and I'll crack your head open," he said, and yelled for help.

The madman did not heed his warning, but rushed upon him. Then Paul used the iron rod

with all his force, and, struck on the head, the madman fell like a log.

It took the youth less than five seconds to reach the door again. He inserted the key in the lock, turned it, and flung the barrier open, to find himself face to face with—Barrett Radley!

“Hullo, Paul Graham! What does this mean?” demanded the man from Africa.

“Mr. Radley!” burst from the young bandmaster’s lips. “Quick! help me! That man on the floor is a maniac! He just tried to kill me!”

“Heavens! you don’t mean it!” Barrett Radley strode forward. “Poor chap, he is frothing at the mouth. I’ll watch him. You go and tell the hotel people.”

But this was unnecessary, for the commotion had already brought a score of people to the spot, among whom was the manager of the house.

By Paul’s advice the madman was securely bound. When he came to his senses he raved incessantly, and in this condition he was carried off by the police.

Later on it was found that he belonged to one of the foremost of Providence families. When a boy he had gone crazy over music and theatricals, and the mania had clung to him ever since. He had escaped from a private asylum three days before, and his keepers had been hunting everywhere for him. The family were exceedingly

sorry for what had occurred, and offered Paul a handsome sum of money for what he had suffered, but this he declined.

“It’s not his fault, poor man,” he said. “All I want you to do in the future is to see that he doesn’t break loose again,” and this promise was readily given.

Barrett Radley had been on his way from New York to Boston. Paul’s letter to the Astor House had caught him just as he was about to leave the metropolis, and he had decided then to stop off at Providence and see the son of his former friend.

A conversation lasting all of an hour took place between the man from Africa and the young bandmaster, and during that time many facts concerning Paul’s inheritance were brought to light and cleared up. Then Paul sought out Thompson.

“I would like to get away for a few days,” he said.

Thompson’s face fell, but when the young bandmaster explained the case he readily agreed to let Paul go, and a telegram was sent to Anderson Powell, asking him to come on and take charge for the time. As Powell had previously agreed to do this whenever the emergency arose, the matter was quickly settled.

The ride to the Hub was uneventful, and half

an hour later found Paul and Barrett Radley closeted with Clinton Fairfield in his office.

"I would like to see Maurice Graham's will," said Radley. "It seems to me it is of very peculiar construction."

"The will is in the surrogate's office at Tipton," answered Fairfield. "We can easily look at it."

"I remember the document well," went on Barrett Radley. "We spilled a lot of ink on the first page in signing. I was for writing the will over, but Mr. Graham said it would not matter."

"Some ink blots?" queried Clinton Fairfield. "Why, the will I saw was as clean as it could be."

"Then it wasn't the will I know of," returned Barrett Radley promptly. "Why, the other witness to that will, an old woman, must remember the ink stains, for some of the ink got on her best dress, and she was very much cut up over it."

"Eliza Dunwell was the other witness—an old colored woman."

"Exactly."

"Suppose we question her about this," put in Paul with deep interest.

"We certainly must," said the lawyer decidedly.

A few minutes later all were on their way to Clinton Fairfield's home.

Eliza Dunwell was found in attendance upon the lawyer's mother.

She remembered Paul well, and also remembered Barrett Radley.

"I want to speak to you about the will Mr. Graham made," said Clinton Fairfield, drawing her aside. "Do you remember the circumstances under which you witnessed it!"

"'Deed I does, Mistah Fairfield," she answered.

"Kindly tell us all about it. I mean, just what took place when you witnessed it."

"Well, sir, in de fust place, Mistah Graham—Paul dere is de dead image of him—was a-layin' on de bed in de front room upstairs, an' Mr. Radley dere an' Hiram Dunkirk and his wife Margy was around him."

"Yes, go on."

"Mr. Dunkirk had de will all ready ter sign, an' he gives de pen ter Mr. Graham. Mr. Graham he asks, 'Is it all right, Hiram?' an' Hiram says, 'Yes, jest as you wants it.' Didn't he, Mr. Radley?"

Barrett Radley bowed.

"Den Mr. Graham he ups an' signs de paper, and Hiram Dunkirk says to Mr. Radley an' myself, 'Will youse witness dis?' Den he hands de pen ter me, an' at de same time Mr. Radley steps forward. Hiram Dunkirk was a-holdin'

de ink bottle, an' de fust t'ing youse know it tipped over an' my best Sunday go-ter-meetin' dress was spiled. I made Hiram Dunkirk buy me a new one fer it. You remember dat, Mr. Radley?"

"Didn't the ink get on anything else?" asked the lawyer.

"Why, yes, it got all over de counterpane of de bed, and half a dozen splashes went over de fust page of de will, and——"

"What did they do about the will?" put in Paul quickly.

"Jest dried it off de best dey could. Somebody wanted ter write de will over, but dey didn't do it."

"Would you remember the will you witnessed if you saw it?" questioned Clinton Fairfield.

"Sure. De blotches was on de paper in a straight streak from one corner across to de udder."

"That is all." The lawyer turned to Paul. "Do you know what I feel sure of? I feel sure that the will that was offered for probate was not the real one, but a forgery!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

HIRAM DUNKIRK IS DUMFOUNDED.

"A FORGERY!" cried Paul.

He had begun to imagine as much, yet the plain declaration of Clinton Fairfield took away his breath.

"Yes, a forgery."

"I believe Hiram Dunkirk mean enough for such a piece of business," put in Barrett Radley.

"Yes, he was not only mean enough for this, but he was crafty enough to make the forgery somewhat like the original so that the truth might not be suspected."

"But he wasn't thoughtful enough to put in the ink spots," added Paul with a strange little laugh. "It looks now as if things were surely coming my way."

"The greatest villains in the world often overreach themselves," was the lawyer's comment.

"Perhaps the spots were removed afterward," burst out the young bandmaster, struck by a sudden thought.

"They could not be removed unless part of the writing was blurred. And I remember distinctly

that the sheet was as clear as could be. However, we had best look at the will again."

The matter was talked over, and it was decided to take the first train for Tipton.

"By the way," asked Paul, "have you heard anything of that detective?"

"Who, Rand? Oh, yes, he found Hooney with ease, and is sticking to him as closely as a leech."

"Perhaps you had best get the pair to go to Tipton, on some pretext, you know."

"A good idea—I will," said Clinton Fairfield.

Rand had left directions where he could be found, and an office boy was sent out with a note for him.

Hooney was with Rand when the note was received.

"Wot's dat yer got?" questioned Hooney with interest.

"Say, here's a chance, Mike," replied Rand. "A tip to come ter Tipton ter meet an old friend wot has struck it rich. Do yer know where Tipton is?"

"Yes, but I aint goin' dere," replied Hooney, who was afraid Paul might be in the neighborhood.

But Rand argued, and finally Hooney consented to go if allowed to make a change in his appearance, which he effected by having his hair

cut, his mustache shaved off, and by getting Rand to buy him a new slouch hat. Rand told him they were sure of a good time, and that the friend would probably return to Boston with them.

In the meantime Paul, Radley, and the lawyer had taken an earlier train to the county seat. A short while after arriving in Tipton they made their way to the surrogate's office. On the steps the young bandmaster met Roscoe, the manager of the local show hall.

"Hullo, Graham, are you back!" cried the manager. "I thought you had——" He stopped short.

"Thought I had gone for good, eh?" laughed Paul. "No, I'm back—for a few days, at least."

"Then you've fixed up that little affair with your guardian?" went on Roscoe in the easy manner of many country people of this section.

"No, but it's going to be fixed," answered Paul significantly.

"I hope he doesn't try to throw you in jail again now that he has his money."

"I don't think he will. If anybody goes to jail it will be Hiram Dunkirk and not I," and without waiting for further words Paul followed his friends into the surrogate's office.

The will which had been offered for probate by Hiram Dunkirk was soon produced. Barrett

Radley scanned it with interest. Then he looked at Paul and the lawyer significantly.

"A forgery, sure enough," he whispered.

"That is all," answered the lawyer quietly.

"Is there something wrong?" questioned the surrogate.

"Very much wrong, sir," answered Clinton Fairfield. "You will know all the particulars in a few days. In the meantime do not let that will go out of your possession."

"I will see that it doesn't leave the safe. But you know the copy is on record."

"Yes, but we want you to look after the original."

"Very well."

The three were soon outside. The Stoneville sleigh, which had taken the place of the stage, was ready to start.

"Might as well go over to Stoneville at once," said the lawyer.

Just then Paul caught sight of Rand and Hooney standing upon the depot platform.

"There is Hooney! Let us take him along!" he cried.

"We will!" answered Clinton Fairfield. "Don't let Hooney suspect Rand," he added cautiously.

They ran over to the platform together.

"So, Hooney, we meet again!" cried Paul,

and caught the fellow by the arm. At the same time the lawyer made a motion to Rand to go away.

"Lemme go!" howled the tough. He wanted to break away, but Paul and the lawyer held him. Then he looked around for his companion, but Rand had disappeared.

Hooney felt much crestfallen, but brightened up when Paul told him he had nothing to fear if he would only go along and tell the truth and stick to it.

"All right, I'll go," he answered, and after that they had no more trouble with him.

The big sleigh was soon on the way. As they passed over the hills and through the hollows Paul pointed out to his companions where he had escaped from Miles Cross, the constable, and his guardian and Joel Burgess.

"What a lot has happened since then!" he concluded, and closed his eyes for a moment to think it over.

At Stoneville they left the stage and hired a private turnout. As they went on Paul turned to his friends.

"If you wouldn't mind, I would like to have a little talk with Mr. Dunkirk before you put in an appearance," he said. "I want to give him a chance to do the right thing, if there is any fairness left in him."

The matter was easily arranged. It was agreed that the others should stop at a cottage near the Dunkirk homestead and they were not to come over until Paul showed a handkerchief at a certain window in the sitting room.

This settled, the boy leaped to the ground and went ahead on foot. Five minutes later he was at the front door of the Dunkirk homestead. Margy Dunkirk admitted him.

"Back ag'in, are ye!" she cried shrilly. "Well, they do say a bad penny is sure to turn up sooner or later. Go into the kitchen and brush the snow off your shoes. I aint a-goin' tew have you dirtyin' the whole house, mind that."

"Who is that, Margy?" came from the sitting room.

"It's Paul Graham, the good-fer-nuthin'!" was the reply, and then Paul heard the hasty folding up of a number of papers and the slamming of a desk front. Before Hiram Dunkirk, however, could leave the sitting room Paul was in the apartment. To relieve Mrs. Dunkirk's anxiety he took off his rubbers and placed them in the wood-box.

"I knowed ye would come back," said Hiram Dunkirk with a cold stare. "That story about earnin' sixty dollars a week was the wust falsehood I ever heerd tell on."

"If you settle down here ag'in, Paul Graham,

you'll have to tell the strict truth," put in Margy. "If ye don't you'll git the broom, sure ez I'm a livin' woman."

"I was always willing to tell the strict truth," answered the youth.

"Are ye willin' to settle down an' behave yourself?" asked Hiram Dunkirk.

"I am willing to settle down, yes."

"An' give up yer cornet playin' an' go to work for Joel Burgess?"

"Let us talk about that later, Mr. Dunkirk. Just now something was said about telling the strict truth. Are you willing to tell me the strict truth?"

"Do you mean to insult me, boy?"

"I mean just what I said. I want the strict truth concerning my father's property."

"I told ye that a dozen times before."

"You told me you had three hundred and forty dollars in the bank belonging to me."

"Jest so, that's right."

"And that is all?"

"That is all. The quarry company busted up, and I was lucky to git what I did."

"Mr. Dunkirk, who made out my father's will?"

"What do you want to know that for?"

"Never mind—answer my question—if you are not afraid."

"Do hear the boy!" gasped Mrs. Dunkirk.

"Afraid? Why should I be? I writ it out for yer father, just as he told me to," snapped Hiram Dunkirk.

"Who was there when you wrote it out?"

"Eliza Dunwell."

"Did my father make more than one will?"

"Of course not."

"Who witnessed the will?"

"See here, I aint in court, Paul Graham. What's the meanin' of this talk, anyway?" howled Hiram Dunkirk savagely.

"He's a-tryin' to corner you, Hiram," interposed Mrs. Dunkirk. "Don't you let him do it."

"If everything was straight you'd not object to answering my questions," said Paul quietly, and drawing his handkerchief from his pocket he sauntered over to the window and held it in full view of the next house for several seconds.

"I asked who witnessed the will, that's all."

"Eliza Dunwell and Barrett Radley."

"And in that will you were sole executor of my father's estate?"

"Yes."

"And he left you one-third of his property in the bargain?"

"Yes. I didn't want it, but he insisted on it, sayin' I was his best friend. He thought more of me than his wayward son does," and Hiram Dun-

kirk tried to grow pathetic, and wiped his eyes, which were as dry as a bone.

“Mr. Dunkirk, you are a thorough scoundrel and a thief!”

“What!” Hiram Dunkirk leaped back as though shot, his eyes blazing furiously. “This to me! You rat—I’ll—I’ll——”

“Skin him, Hiram, skin him!” burst out Mrs. Dunkirk. “Hold him till I git the blacksnake whip! We’ll teach him manners!”

“That’s right, Margy, we will!”

Hiram Dunkirk leaped forward, intent upon catching Paul by the throat, but the youth dodged him and ran out into the hallway. At that moment came the tramping of feet upon the piazza.

“Stop, Paul Graham, stop!” snarled Hiram Dunkirk. “Stop or never dare to set your foot again in this house!”

He came after Paul as far as the door. The youth had just time in which to throw the barrier open when Dunkirk caught him by the shoulder.

“Now I’ll thrash you within——”

Hiram Dunkirk was going to say “an inch of your life,” but the words died on his lips, and he staggered back and turned deadly pale.

“Barrett Radley!” he faltered in dumfounded tones. “When—when did you git back from Africky?”

“Only about a week ago.”

“And—and what brought you here?”

“I am here to see justice done to Paul Graham,” was the answer, which filled Hiram Dunkirk with keen dismay.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FAREWELL TO THE YOUNG BANDMASTER.

"To see justice done?"

"That is what I said, Hiram Dunkirk. Supposing we go in and talk this matter over."

"Were—were you outside waitin' for Paul?"

"We were near by, yes."

"You imp, to deceive me!" snarled Hiram Dunkirk, turning a look full of hatred upon the young bandmaster.

"Never mind, Hiram, we'll make it up to him," put in Mrs. Dunkirk significantly.

"If you get the chance," murmured Paul.

The whole party were soon in the sitting room. Hiram Dunkirk tried to get into the chair in front of his desk, but, struck with a sudden idea, Paul appropriated that seat.

"Let me sit there," said his guardian roughly.

"You sit down in the corner."

"I'll remain right here," answered the young bandmaster coolly, and then as Dunkirk reached forward to lock the desk Paul caught the key from the lock and slipped it into his pocket.

"You rascal, give me that key!"

"I will—after we have come to terms."

"I want the key at once."

"Does the desk contain so much of importance?"

"Never you mind about that," snarled Dunkirk.

"Perhaps it contains my father's will," went on the youth suggestively.

The chance shot struck home. The wrinkled face of Hiram Dunkirk grew as white as a sheet.

"'Taint so!" he shrieked. "Your father's will is with the surrogate at Tipton."

"Mr. Dunkirk," put in Barrett Radley sternly, "you know better than that."

"Know better!" faltered Paul's guardian.

"Yes, better. You know that the will at Tipton is a base forgery."

Hiram Dunkirk fell back in consternation. He tried to support himself, then fell like a log into an easy chair.

"It aint no forgery!" burst in Mrs. Dunkirk. "If you say it is, you——"

"Silence, woman, unless you want to go to prison with your husband," interrupted Barrett Radley.

"To prison!" moaned Hiram Dunkirk. His wife tried to echo the words, but failed. Both looked from Barrett Radley to Paul, then with

the yell of a madman Hiram Dunkirk hurled himself at the boy.

But the move came too late. Unobserved, Paul had slipped the key into the desk and drawn down the cover. The mass of papers Hiram Dunkirk had been examining was disclosed, and on top of the heap rested—the true will of Maurice Graham!

“Give me that!” yelled Dunkirk, and made a clutch for the precious document. But Paul threw it over his head to Clinton Fairfield, and the lawyer and Barrett Radley began to examine it.

“This is the real document,” said the man from Africa. “Here are the ink blotches, as you can see.”

“In this will Anderson Powell and Hiram Dunkirk are made joint executors,” said Fairfield. “And Dunkirk gets nothing but what the law entitles him to.”

“It’s a—a—plot ag’in me!” gasped Hiram Dunkirk. “It’s a plot hatched out by Paul Graham!”

“It is no plot, Hiram Dunkirk,” said Clinton Fairfield quietly but firmly. “We are after the truth and justice, that is all. The will on record is a forgery. This is the real will, as not only Mr. Radley, but also Eliza Dunwell can testify. Furthermore, we can prove that you tried to put

Paul out of the way, for Mike Hooney is found, and we know just where to place our hands upon him."

As he concluded the lawyer tapped on a window glass. In a second more Mike Hooney entered, in the custody of a neighbor.

"Hooney!" murmured Hiram Dunkirk, and the last drop of courage seemed to ooze from him. He tried to go on, then dropped beside the table and buried his face in his hands. Seeing this, Mrs. Dunkirk burst out into a flood of crocodile tears.

"Poor Hiram! Poor Hiram!" she wailed. "An' it's all on account o' that miserable good-fer-nuthin' Paul Graham!" and she flopped into a chair in a corner. Then of a sudden she arose and caught Paul by the hand. "Paul, Paul, don't you be hard-hearted! Don't you send my Hiram to—to—prison! He didn't mean no harm! He was goin' to leave all his property to you when he died, anyway!"

"Mr. Dunkirk's future rests with himself," answered the youth. "If he will square up——"

"I will—I will!" came from the miserable man. "I will do anything, only don't send me to prison. Don't bring sech a disgrace upon my remainin' gray hairs!"

"Then you acknowledge your wrongdoings?" questioned the lawyer.

“I might ez well—you’ve hedged me in so ez I can’t turn. But I’ll square up with Paul—he shall have every penny ez is comin’ to him.”

“If you’ll promise to do the right thing I’ll promise not to prosecute you,” said the young bandmaster, but not without considerable disgust.

“He ought to be sent up for forgery,” said Barrett Radley. “However——”

“Don’t—don’t!” cried Hiram Dunkirk. “I’ll give you everything I’ve got—everything—only let me off. Let me off this once, please!”

And he almost groveled at the feet of those before him. His defeat had been complete, and from that moment on Paul was master of the situation.

Let us skip a period of two years.

In the due course of time the young bandmaster came into possession of his own. The various properties which Hiram Dunkirk had been holding back footed up to a total of twenty-six thousand dollars—not a large fortune, to be sure, but still an amount that Paul considered well worth working for. As the youth was not yet twenty-one, Anderson Powell was appointed his nominal guardian until he should become of age.

Paul was tender-hearted enough to forgive Hiram Dunkirk for his misdeeds, and after the tan-

gle had been straightened out nothing was said by either Paul or the others about the affair. But the neighbors suspected something was wrong, and they questioned Mrs. Dunkirk, who in a fit of anger against Paul exposed both her husband and herself.

This exposure brought on a quarrel between man and wife, and in high anger Mrs. Dunkirk went off to live with some relations. But they soon grew tired of her sharp tongue, and set her adrift to earn her own living, which she is doing to this day in the poorest and most miserable fashion imaginable.

The exposure ruined Hiram Dunkirk absolutely. He was in debt in several places, and while he might have pulled through if given time, his creditors swarmed down upon him, and he was sold out at sheriff's sale. He was too old to start life anew, and so drifted to the Stoneville poorhouse. At this place he still remains, and the only consolation he receives from time to time is a brief note from his former ward, inclosing a gift of money. The reception of this money oftentimes gives him some queer feelings.

"I don't know but what I misjudged Paul most dreadfully," he sniffled once. "He wasn't no bad sort, after all. I was a fool to try to do him out of what was his'n, but Margy put me up to't, talkin' every day about how nice we could live,

an' what lovely carpets an' furniture she could have! An' now it's all sold off, an' here I am, an' she—well, I reckon she's wuss off—an' I'm glad of it!" and he heaved a mountainous sigh over the thought of what might have been.

As soon as his affairs in America were settled up Barrett Radley returned to Africa, where he held large business interests in Cape Town. Paul went to see him off, and on parting presented the speculator with a handsome ring as a token of his regard. To this day the two correspond constantly.

Mike Hooney has reformed. Paul studied the fellow and decided that there was the making of a man in him if rightly handled, and he took the tough under his care, and Hooney is now baggage manager for Graham's Golden Cornet Band and Thompson's Combination of International Stars.

For Paul is now one of the heads of the organization, having purchased the interest held by Anderson Powell. Of the stars, Horatio Calliwax is the head, with a reputation as an impersonator and funny man which is second to none. He draws a salary of a hundred dollars per week, and is worth every cent of it. Best of all, he and drink are utter strangers.

As of yore, Paul leads the band and plays solos. He is famous, likewise, for having composed half

a dozen stirring military marches and popular airs, and these have brought him in considerable cash. His organization is now making an extended tour throughout the United States and Canada, and is already booked for the season at the next World's Fair, to be held at Paris. He is no longer poor and obscure, but rich and well known; and here, on the highway of success, we will shake him by the hand and bid him good-by.

THE END.



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